

The fourth candidate for the new mission house, seminarian Reichart, on “the advice of his confessor ... delayed doing so for some days” (Bornemann, *Arnold Janssen*, Engl. edition, p. 64).

As Fr. Arnold had wished, Fr. Bill also notified him of the vow: “I immediately wrote to Fr. Janssen that I had made the vow but at the same time, I expressed my reservations about whether we would find a good balance in writing the constitutions of the house” (*Erinnerungen von Pfarrer Bill* [Memoirs of Fr. Bill], unpublished manuscript, p. 19).

Arnold Janssen answered Fr. Bill’s letter on June 22, 1875:

“Dear Rev. Father!

I wrote to your Bishop already more than eight days ago without having received an answer. He probably is waiting for a word from your side. Will you please be so good and do it without delay. ...

Mr. Ronck in Steyl is making belated difficulties regarding vacating the house; however, I hope that everything will be settled. At the same time I ask you to be so kind and tell me why his father did not sign the contract, as I had wished, but did so himself [for he now speaks of lacking authorization].

Do not be afraid with regard to the organization or the life of the house, since we have to strive for complete inner harmony in all these regards!

Pray for Mr. Anzer in Regensburg as well as for yourself so that, if it is God’s holy will, you both will receive the necessary permission of your bishop. For him [Anzer] it will be more difficult than for you. (Fr. Peter Bill, *Korrespondenz* [Correspondence], p.3-4). He “seems to be such a generous soul and joined us in making the vow; Reichart’s confessor had reservations, however. For my part, having obtained the approval of Dr. von Essen, I concluded the purchase on 16 June. Thus in the future we will be able to regard that day as our birthday.

Let us pray ardently to God that he may fill us more and more with a greater knowledge of our sinfulness and nothingness and, at the same time, with great trust in him in a spirit of generous devotion. *Vivat Cor Jesu in Cordibus Nostris* [May the Heart of Jesus live in our Hearts] ...” (in Alt, *Journey in Faith*, p. 68).

On June 29, 1875, Bishop Nikolaus Adames of Luxemburg gave the written permission to Fr. Bill to join the new mission house (Fr. Peter Bill, *Korrespondenz* [Correspondence], unpublished manuscript, p. 4).



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The Arnoldus Family Story

June 16, 1875

At the request of Arnold Janssen, Fr. Peter Bill had travelled to Steyl on June 9, 1875 to have the sales contract for the new mission house signed there. Actually it was not the owner of the house, Nicolaus Ronck, who signed it on June 9, but his son J[ean]. N. Ronck, which led to complications later on.

Fr. Arnold signed the contract in Kempen on June 16, after having received the consent of Msgr. von Essen for the purchase of the house. In a postscript to the contract Fr. Arnold wrote:

After having received the consent of Rev. Fr. von Essen, having fulfilled this one and only condition, today I for my part have once again definitively accepted the aforementioned purchase under the conditions spelled out there.

Kempen, June 16, 1875 Arnold Janssen (H. Fischer, *Arnold Janssen*, Steyl 1919, p. 117).

This same June 16 is important for yet another reason.

For the Catholic Church “it was the 200th anniversary of the appearance of the Divine Savior to Blessed Margareta Alacoque, when He requested the institution of the feast of his most Sacred Heart. The Holy Father Pius IX had attached indulgences to a prayer of consecration to the Divine Heart of Jesus” (Herm. auf der Heide, *Die Missionsgesellschaft von Steyl. Ein Bild der ersten 25 Jahre ihres Bestehens* [The Mission Society of Steyl - A picture of the first 25 years of its existence], published by the *Missionsdruckerei*, Steyl, 1900, p. 34). Together with many Catholics, Fr. Arnold, Fr. Bill and seminarian Anzer consecrated themselves to the Sacred Heart, each one in the place where he was at the time. To this consecration they added a vow which referred to the goals of the mission house. Unfortunately we do not have the exact wording of the vow which Fr. Arnold made. However, we do have almost the complete wording of the vow which seminarian Anzer made. On June 16 he wrote to Fr. Arnold:

“Every time I receive a letter from your Reverence I am truly happy. Yes, I have truly every reason for it; for from each new letter I get to know your *paternal* love and care for me more and more. And, therefore, I am greatly obliged to you – I feel it very much – and I will strive as much as I can to live up to your expectations. However, I cannot do much; the Divine Heart, however, which even rewards

a glass of water given out of love, will certainly repay you a thousand times for all the good you are doing for me and that you are prepared to do for my relatives. With regard to the latter, I will first turn to a few better off people. I will tell you the result of that as soon as possible.

On June 22 our Most Reverend Bishop will return to Regensburg from administering confirmation and then I will hand in to him my second request for the dimissorial papers.

From your letter I saw the increase in our membership which gives me great joy.

I feel completely blessed by the events of today. Oh, what a joy it is to be able to consecrate oneself totally to the Heart of Jesus! But will the Sacred Heart accept me? Let us hope so.

I based my prayer of consecration on the one you so graciously sent to me and linked my vow to it. I am sending you a copy for your kind attention.

Vivat cor Jesu in cordibus nostris [May the heart of Jesus live in our hearts!]"

Anzer's vow of June 16 follows here:

"To this general prayer of consecration which your representative on earth today graced with indulgences, O Jesus, I join the following vow to achieve a still more intimate consecration:

In conformity with the fervent desires of your most Sacred Heart which seeks in a special way to spread your holy kingdom on earth, today, prostrate before you, my Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer, I place my humble person totally, unconditionally and without self-interest, with all that I am and have, at the disposal of your Divine Heart for the mission work of your holy church. I give you my body, so that all my abilities will serve only you at the service of the missions. I give you my intellect so that, supported by you, it will tend to the profane and sacred sciences, but only so that it can glorify you all the more at the service of the missions; I give you my soul, so that you may inflame it with the fire of your love, so that it will readily take upon itself the difficulties of the apostolate and consume itself in the loving service of the holy missionary work.

Out of love for you, O Divine Heart, I renounce all the temptations and joys of this world which are nothing but deception and vanity; I renounce a pleasant and quiet life, the prospects that life might offer me, honor and respect and all that could make me well-liked in the world; out of love for you I forego my fatherland, my acquaintances and friends, my poor mother and little sisters. O Heart! I entrust them to you, take care of them, you can do it best, protect them from the evil of the world. – Yet, O sweetest Heart of my Savior, tell me, what can I still renounce, what else can I offer to you? Yes, I still have something – myself, my will, my freedom. Oh, take everything, may it be consecrated to you joyfully, not only for a few moments, days or years, no, but forever! And because I have renounced my freedom, in holy obedience towards my future spiritual superiors I will work in your holy missionary service where and how it may please them.

At the same time, O most Sacred Heart of Jesus, I wish to assure you, as I have often done already, of the purity of my intentions. You know I do not look for earthly joys and sensual pleasure, not for vain honor and glory, but only the salvation of my soul and the souls of so many others. Only your will do I seek to fulfill, it is the highest norm of my life. O Divine Heart, let me recognize it today, on this your day so full of grace; make your will known to me in a way that excludes any doubt. I know only too well that of all human beings I am the least worthy to become an instrument for the spread of your holy gospel. And precisely because I am so deeply aware of my unworthiness, I tremble to think that it is your holy will that I become a missionary and member of that German mission house which is just coming into being. If it should not be your will, let the Most Rev. Bishop keep to his decision and not release me under any circumstances from the diocese, and prevent me from finding any support for my mother and sisters; however, should it be your will then grant that the Most Rev. Bishop will sign the dimissorial letter at my second request and that I will find some support for my relatives. You can fulfill my plea, O Jesus! For you are the One who guides the hearts like streams of water, and on this day you will answer the prayers of all your people. And may you, my dearest Mother of Perpetual Help, whose feast is celebrated today, obtain from your Son's Heart the fulfillment of my prayer.

If this last prayer is granted, then for my part I will fulfill two things:

1) In order to show my gratitude, I oblige myself *sub gravi* to publish the answer to my prayer in the Messenger of the Divine Heart, where such answers to prayers are recorded annually;

2) My above-mentioned vow shall then receive full validity and, after a retreat of at least three days, it shall only be up to the confessor chosen for the general confession to dispense me completely from this vow, in case he thinks that should be done. (Now follows the conclusion of the prayer of consecration that you had been so kind as to send to me.)

Regensburg, June 16, 1875,

John Anzer..."

(Johannes B. Anzer +, Briefe aus dem Jahre 1875 an Arnold Janssen [Letters from 1875 to Arnold Janssen], Verbum 3, 1961, pp.63-65; part of Anzer's letter to Arnold Janssen from Alt, Journey in faith, p.68).

"In conformity with the fervent desires of your most Sacred Heart" – these words of the vow formula are also part of the vow formula which was used during the first years of the mission house, as Fr. auf der Heide writes on p. 36 of his book "*Die Missionsgesellschaft von Steyl. Ein Bild der ersten 25 Jahre ihres Bestehens*" [The Mission Society of Steyl. A picture of the first 25 years of its existence]. Arnold Janssen will have spoken them as well on June 16, 1875. They have their origin in the spirituality of the Apostleship of Prayer. To make the desires of Jesus one's own is one of the basic ideas of this apostolate.