

About this first encounter Fr. Arnold continues: *“I explained to him that I could not accept him as a candidate at first, only as a carpenter. He should give the matter some thought. If God were really calling him to be a missionary, it would be easy for him to move my will to accept him as a candidate; he should, therefore, think it over. He went off; and when he returned, he said he would accept my proposal. The superior of the Ursuline convent in Kempen, where I was chaplain, agreed to keep him. So he remained there the first eight to fourteen days and made the first kitchen cabinet in the convent workshop. In July he took it with him to Steyl ...”* (ibid., p. 70).

According to the anecdote told by Fr. Blum, Erlemann did not only work in the carpenter’s workshop, but he also learned the first Latin words. Walking with Fr. Arnold in the garden, the latter “tested his vocabulary” “and if Erlemann looked around, he was loudly reprimanded with, ‘Eyes forward!’ The boarding school girls who happened to be in the garden heard it and giggled” (ibid.).

### The signing of the new sales contract

Fr. Arnold accepted Mr. Ronck’s time schedule for the Ronck family to vacate the property. “On June 30, the feast of St. Paul, he ‘concluded the purchase transaction with Mr. Ronck in the presence of a notary in *optima forma* according to which he had to vacate the out-buildings now, the main house on 1 August 1875 and the storehouse on 1 August 1876” (Alt, *Journey in Faith*, p. 69).

Full of joy Fr. Arnold wrote to his brother John on July 2, 1875: “The mission house is now safely and securely bought. It is situated in Steyl between the parish church and the Maas, measuring 65 hectares (approx. 2 2/3 morgen), fifteen minutes west of Tegelen railway station, one hour south of Venlo, one and a quarter hours west of Kaldenkirchen ...” (ibid.).

*“I can only rejoice when a German - Dutch house for the foreign missions will be established. Perhaps it pleases God to use the storm against the church in Germany in favor of the foreign missions. That Rev. Fr. Arnold Janssen has the vocation to carry out such a project seems to follow clearly from the documents which he submitted. May God bless the project .“*  
(Bishop Franz Joseph Rudigier, Bishop of Linz (Austria), May 10, 1875)  
(Kleiner Herz-Jesu-Bote [Little Messenger of the Sacred Heart], No. 6, June 1875, p. 48).



## The Arnoldus Family Story

### Msgr. Dr. von Essen and Arnold Janssen – further developments

On June 9, 1875 the sales contract for the new mission house in Steyl – a former inn – had been signed only by the son of the owner of the old inn, J. N. Ronck, but not by Arnold Janssen. He was waiting for Msgr. Dr. von Essen’s consent to the contract. Having received it, Fr. Arnold signed the contract on June 16.

Right from the first time that Msgr. von Essen and Arnold Janssen met in 1874 there had been tensions between them. Those tensions surfaced once again in June 1875. In that month Fr. Arnold published the article *“Schriftliche Erklärungen kirchlicher Behörden, betreffend die Errichtung des Missionshauses für die Länder deutscher und niederländischer Zunge”* (Written statements of ecclesiastical authorities regarding the establishment of the mission house for German and Dutch speaking countries) in his mission magazine *“Kleiner Herz-Jesu-Bote”* (Little Messenger of the Sacred Heart). The article began thus: “Because of the number of the statements available, it will be impossible to publish all of them in their entirety and we must limit ourselves to relating only the most eminent points. Statements 1, 2, 3 and 11 were directed to Msgr. Dr. von Essen, parish priest of Neuwerk in the archdiocese of Cologne, the others to the publisher of this magazine, priest of the diocese of Muenster, formerly for 12 years teacher of Mathematics and Natural Sciences at the Bocholt Junior High School. Initially the former hoped to be able to start the project in his parish or in some other place in Germany or Austria; the latter decided to begin with the project in Holland and to designate it also for Holland and connect an apostolic school with it. Since the two teamed up, the statements directed to the two of them refer to the same project.” The eleventh document which Fr. Arnold printed was the answer of Archbishop Paulus Melchers of Cologne to a letter which Fr. Arnold and Msgr. von Essen had written jointly to the Archbishop regarding the founding of the mission house. Since Msgr. von Essen was a priest of the Cologne archdiocese, he had signed the letter in the first place and the Archbishop’s answer of March 20, 1875 had been directed to him. At the end of the letter the Archbishop addressed Msgr. von

Essen with these words: “Wishing your project from the bottom of my heart God’s blessing, I regret not to be able to grant to your Reverence the release from your office of parish priest.” To these words of the Archbishop Fr. Arnold added in brackets: “The latter was and could not be requested because of the situation the church is in; instead Fr. von Essen reserved to himself the support of the project, which therefore will rest at first on someone else’s shoulders, financially and in important matters with his advice.” It seems that Msgr. von Essen did not like the [by JO] underlined words and informed Fr. Arnold of it (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. 102). In reply on **June 18, 1875** Fr. Arnold wrote a letter to him, the text of which, as edited by Bornemann, originates “from a draft which was corrected many times and is difficult to read” (ibid., footnote 3):

*Striving for humility asks only that one judge one’s own person unfavorably in as much as that is more or less in line with the obvious truth. It does not require us to act against the rules of prudence. And so in fact I would not have been able to let myself give you more than I have conceded to you... For this reason... I beg the good Lord that he will fill you with a far greater mistrust of your own person and the perfect purity of your intentions, and please spare me from having to prove to you with the aid of individual examples that this request is justified. Please, do not take this as an assertion that in this and that you were just seeking yourself. I have never claimed that. It just displeases me that in this regard you yourself have no greater distrust towards yourself ...I believe that this is a matter of greatest importance and I ask you out of humility to give some weight to my words. –*

*Concerning myself, it consoles me in some way that I often so strongly feel my own inadequacy for the project which I have started, that I can only move ahead trusting in God’s providence and I ask the dear Lord, that He will let me feel this still more and more yet so that it will be possible for His divine majesty to do with us according to the fullness of His mercy. ...*

*P.S. In order to avoid misunderstandings it will perhaps be good to add still the following. Wrong self-love is an enemy which only dies with our death and which has to be overcome mainly through fear. Whoever does not fear this enemy is already defeated. How little do people work in God’s house only for God’s sake, without petty concern for one’s own person. That is why there is often so little blessing! For this reason it will be one of my main concerns to make these principles, which I indicated, a cornerstone of our house and I ask you to support me in this regard with your prayer so that I myself will observe what I tell others” (ibid., pp. 102-103).*

It was in that year 1875 that Msgr. von Essen had begun to publish his own little magazine, the “St. Joseph’s magazine”. From June 1875 on it carried articles

about the future mission house. The first article was his essay “Germany and the foreign missions” which he had already published in 1874 in the “Gladbacher Volkszeitung” [the Gladbach Peoples’ Newspaper] and in the “Kleiner Herz-Jesu-Bote” [Little Messenger of the Sacred Heart], however without mentioning his name and position. In June 1875 he gave up this anonymity and mentioned himself with his title “parish priest of Neuwerk.”

### **The need for a new sales contract and the first pupil**

On June 9, 1875 Mr. J. N. Ronck had signed the sales contract for the mission house; however, then some difficulties arose concerning the Ronck family’s vacating the property. On June 19, 1875 Mr. Ronck wrote to Arnold Janssen, that only the out-buildings (the shed, etc.) would be available for the mission seminary in July, the main building in August 1875 and the storehouse in August 1876. “Otherwise, ‘Reverend Sir, keep your money and we will keep the house’” (Bornemann, Arnold Janssen (Engl. ed.), p. 64).

These words of Mr. Ronck meant that a new sales contract had to be signed. However, before that happened, a young man appeared on Fr. Arnold’s doorstep in Kempen, to join the new mission house as a student of the apostolic school. His name was *Heinrich Erlemann*, born on March 5, 1852. In the register of the apostolic school’s students (1875-1906) he was given the number “1”, that means he is considered the first pupil of the new mission house. As date of entry June 24, 1875 is given, the day when he met Fr. Arnold in Kempen. Fr. Arnold himself tells us the story of Erlemann’s coming to Kempen:

*“Mr. Erlemann, the first resident and candidate, was born in Waldersloh, Beckum District, Diocese of Muenster. By profession he was a church furniture maker and a sculptor. Even when he was young, he always wanted to be a missionary and resolutely held on to this idea no matter how often his father told him it was out of the question. Since his time for military service was drawing near, he decided to go to America to pursue his goal there. He had made preparations for the journey and already bought the ticket. On the way to Hamburg or Bremen he went to Muenster, Westphalia, to visit Mr. Eikenbrock (also from Wadersloh) who was in the Borromaeum College. The latter told him about the proposed mission house. Erlemann immediately decided to visit me and came directly from Muenster to Kempen via Geldern. It was the feast of St. John the Baptist” (Alt, *Journey in Faith*, p. 70).*

When Erlemann entered Fr. Arnold’s room he was “working at his desk without looking up and invited Erlemann to take a seat. Erlemann immediately sat on the sofa. When the Rector turned around and noticed this ‘presumption’, he invited Erlemann to sit on a chair saying, ‘You could have sat on a chair’ (anecdote, related by Fr. Nikolaus Blum SVD, in ibid., footnote 108).