

The Picpus Congregation was founded in 1800 during the French Revolution. Its official name in Latin is “Congregatio Sacrorum Cordium Jesu et Mariae necnon adorationis perpetuae Sanctissimi Sacramenti Altaris”, short SSCC. In English their name is “Congregation of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary and of the Perpetual Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar.” Their name, as we see, includes perpetual adoration as part of their life.

In his memoirs Fr. Peter Bill wrote that he had told Fr. Arnold about his anxiety for the future. In response Fr. Arnold wrote on **July 23, 1875**:

“You wrote you would like to hear something from Kempen. Perhaps I would like even more to hear something from Buschrodt [Fr. Bill’s place of residence]. Also I understand the dark clouds quite well. One easily thinks: You know what you have; what you will get, however, is still so uncertain. However, in my opinion God’s will for you can no longer be in doubt. Let us hold on to it and let us remember that God wishes only what is good and best for us. I myself also had my time of tough struggles, when I felt as if I had to let myself be crucified if I continued the work. In addition there was physical misery and much that was disagreeable. But it seemed to me that I would act contrary to God’s holy will if I gave up the work. Therefore I have kept to it and I have continued to work for it; and I do not doubt, that our dear Lord wants this work and that he is the true *agens* [the one who acts], who does not find it below his dignity to use our poor powers for this purpose (see Peter Bill, Correspondence, unpublished German written manuscript, p. 5).

Fr. Arnold then mentions that the Paris mission seminary agreed to a visit by members of the future mission house; that, however could happen only on October 2 at the earliest, since there were still holidays at that time. He continues:

“Our good carpenter Heinrich is valiantly at work. He made the kitchen cabinets here. Now he is busy with a desk and it is possible that these first fruits of his work are for you. We made the drawings together here and he has converted the very last room of the outbuilding in Steyl into a comfortable workshop.

I hope God will soon send us a cook and then you [Fr. Bill] must be prepared to come over here soon” (Alt, *Journey in Faith*, pp. 71-72). Fr Arnold himself had given the Ursulines notice of his resignation as their chaplain, so he also wrote.



To find a cook turned out to be easy. For on **July 24, 1875** Fr. Arnold’s youngest brother John informed him that their brother, Capuchin Brother Juniperus, would like to join Arnold Janssen in Steyl, since the Capuchins had to leave their monastery in Muenster because of the Kulturkampf (cultural battle) (see *ibid.*, p. 72). Bro. Juniperus was a cook.



The Arnoldus Family Story

The New Mission House for Foreign Missions for Germany, Austria and the Netherlands (cont.)

In the March 2011 issue of ‘The Arnoldus Family Story’ we read excerpts from the article “The New Mission House for Foreign Missions for Germany, Austria and the Netherlands” which Arnold Janssen had published in July 1875 in his mission magazine “Kleiner Herz-Jesu-Bote” – “Little Messenger of the Sacred Heart”. We begin this new issue of ‘The Arnoldus Family Story’ with the continuation of that article.

Arnold Janssen had presented Steyl as the place for the new mission house and he had praised “the absolutely beautiful location on the Maas, which here has high banks with lush meadows and where directly opposite, a short distance from the river, one can see the village of Baarlo.” Then Fr. Arnold continued:

“In some respects we would have preferred it if we could have found something suitable closer to Venlo and Kaldenkirchen. However, since that was not the case and since we unfortunately lack the power to create, we will begin here in God’s name and for the time being we will be content with what divine goodness has granted us here. Even though it is not a castle or a palace with huge shiny rooms, it is, nevertheless, a house meant to be lived in.

And even though there are some rooms adjacent to it which earlier served to house animals, if we know how to make them comfortable, we will not reject these rooms, since the founder of our holy religion saw the light of day for the first time in similar rooms. Yes, should precisely this small beginning not be a reminder to love the small and outwardly inconspicuous everywhere and always and to be happy whenever we can to show this, without detriment to suitability. For the time being we certainly want to be content with what Divine Providence sent us, remembering how poorly a missionary in a foreign country is lodged. What the happy further development of the holy work will soon compellingly demand is certainly another matter, and in that regard, trusting in Divine Providence and the charity of the faithful, we will perhaps soon have to take another step.

“This much, dear reader, I have now told you about the German mission house. Hopefully that will be sufficient for the time being. Pray fervently for it, however, so

that those who live there will not fall behind in the great task which will be given to them. In no. 6 [of the Little Messenger of the Sacred Heart] I told you of the blessing of the Holy Father and of so many most reverend bishops in Germany, Austria and the Netherlands – that is of those countries which all will be present already at the foundation; now you must help ensure that this blessing will be followed by the divine blessing, and do not forget the words of our Lord which we will be allowed to apply to ourselves here, insofar they apply to us, without our wanting to claim anything great for ourselves:

Whoever welcomes you welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me. Whoever welcomes a prophet in the name of a prophet will receive a prophet's reward; and whoever welcomes a righteous person in the name of a righteous person will receive the reward of the righteous; and whoever gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones in the name of a disciple – truly I tell you, none of these will lose their reward.

“How the kind reader will understand ‘to welcome’, we can leave up to him. We just wish to remark that with the purchase [of the mission house] our means are exhausted, and thus St. Joseph, whom we have asked to be our benevolent foster father, must help us further through the mediation of good people. Right now we have nothing but the bare walls and we can only set out along our path when Christian charity has decorated it with its good deeds.

“How much will still be needed for our livelihood, for the chapel, kitchen, clothes, linen, beds and the necessary supplies, library and classroom not excluded, in particular, however, for a new building which will most probably already soon be necessary!

“May Christian charity not abandon us, and may the rich and noble people not lag behind the middle classes.”

In a footnote to the needs mentioned in the article Fr. Arnold writes:

“We would request Catholic book shops in Germany, Austria and the Netherlands to make available to us, so that we could build up a library, one to three free copies of all books drawn from in their publishers, if possible also the publisher's catalogue. If, however, sending the books is too expensive, we ask them to kindly make the publisher's catalogue available to us for a provisional selection. We will not fail to publically thank the kind donors. For this so eminently Catholic and national work, which ... is free of any political overtones and which is destined to free us Catholics from the shame we feel when we compare ourselves to other Catholic countries and even the Protestants of Germany, we feel we may permit ourselves to make this appeal to their Catholic ethos, as well as the request for the aforementioned small sacrifice....” (In the light of other Catholic countries and even the German Protestants having mission houses for training their missionaries, Fr. Arnold saw the fact that Germany did not have its own Catholic mission house for

training Catholic German missionaries as a disgrace. The new mission house in Steyl was to remove that disgrace from Germany.)

Fr. Arnold continues:

“We are making the request for the library now, because we will need one immediately; it is for the teachers in the house who are to educate the future missionaries and its main purpose will be the very necessary cultivation of Christian science demanded by the present circumstances – and at the same time we need to be able to decide what rooms we will need for the library in the new building that is soon becoming necessary. Our dear Lord will reward everything.”

Preparations during the month of July 1875 for the opening of the Mission House in Steyl

None of the future residents of the mission house had any experience of life in a mission house, and so on **July 1, 1875** Fr. Arnold wrote to Fr. Bill in Luxemburg: “I was thinking it might be a good idea for one or two of us to spend a learning period in an established mission house; I intend to inquire at the seminary of the Paris Foreign Missions. Would you be so kind as to tell me whether you, too, agree with this” (Alt, *Journey in Faith*, p. 71).

During this time Fr. Arnold was not alone in Kempen. With him was – as already mentioned earlier - the carpenter Heinrich Erlemann who wanted to become a priest and missionary; first, however, he had to do carpentry work. On **July 12, 1875** he moved to Steyl and “became the first resident” there. “He set up his workshop in the annex which had already been vacated, ... He had to live in the village until the main building of the inn was no longer occupied” (Bornemann, *Arnold Janssen*, Engl. ed., transl. John Vogelgesang, Arnoldus Press Manila, 1975, p. 65). On **July 18**, his first Sunday in Steyl, Erlemann wrote to Fr. Arnold. “He wrote about the people in Steyl and Tegelen, their reserved piety, their industriousness and his own modest attempts to set up the carpentry workshop” (Alt, *Journey in Faith*, p. 71). He complained that the Steyl people seemed to charge very much for those who came from elsewhere. “First of all I note that seventy cents is a high price for the food and I have already wondered if it would not be cheaper if I cooked for myself” (H. Erlemann, *Der erste Brief eines “Steylers” aus Steyl* [The first letter of a “Steyl missionary” from Steyl], in *Verbum* 3, 1961, p. 93).

On this **July 18, 1875** Fr. Arnold made the following interesting remark regarding the new mission house in a letter to the prioress of the Nazareth Adoration Convent in Tegelen: “Regarding the institute, so far we have been thinking of taking the Third Order of St. Dominic as the foundation and introducing some kind of perpetual adoration in the manner of the Picpus Congregation as soon as possible. “ He added the request, “to consider how much we beginners need prayer in order to achieve even only partially the great goal before us” (Alt, *Journey in Faith*, p. 71).