

However, I was used to having a short preparation in church in front of the Blessed Sacrament, usually to say the prayers in the missal (in those days we had morning prayer in one of the rooms of the house which had been changed into a prayer room). Therefore I once left the prayer room before the Veni Creator had been sung in order to pray in church for a few minutes in front of the Blessed Sacrament. This upset Fr. Janssen very much. Because of that, from then on, I always stayed until the Veni Creator had been sung“... (Peter Bill, Memoirs, p. 30).

Frs. Arnold and Bill were not only of different opinions about prayers but also regarding the structural changes which had to be made in the mission house which had once been an inn; that old inn consisted of a two storey residential building and an adjacent one-storied outbuilding, which had once housed stable, barn and brewery and there was also a small annex to it. Fr. Bill writes in his memoirs:

“First the kitchen was to be changed. I wanted it to be in the old stable whereas Fr. Janssen wanted to have a study-room there; I was against it because in my opinion there was not enough light. Then Fr. Janssen wanted to immediately build toilets in the outbuilding which I did not agree with. I maintained that they should only be built once the whole outbuilding was going to be renovated; furthermore there was no real need since there was already one toilet in the house.

“In the attic under the roof there were to be dormitories for the students; but first a ceiling had to be made. Once this was decided it took quite some time until the move was made to get the building materials. Soon this and then that was lacking; and I couldn't take care of the matter, since I did not know anybody and I didn't have any connections with people and furthermore I did not know the language well enough, but particularly since Fr. Janssen didn't authorize me to do anything; he wanted to do everything himself. ...

“There was no progress with regard to the dormitories under the roof. Furthermore Fr. Janssen had the strangest plans for getting them built; and since winter was approaching and I put pressure on him, he thought that the job could be done in a few days without taking into account that the ceiling needed time to dry. I just kept hoping more and more that a third person with authority and experience would come ....” (ibid.).



## The Arnoldus Family Story

Arnold Janssen enjoyed the support of many good people in Steyl and Venlo, as well as in Germany whose services helped the mission house to survive. As in the previous issue of “The Arnoldus Family Story”, we will also remember some of those people in this issue.

The mission house was founded on September 8, 1875. Winter was approaching and so food had to be stocked up. As a Capuchin monk, Fr. Arnold's brother, Br. Juniperus Janssen, was experienced in collecting alms. Therefore he offered to beg farmers in nearby Germany for food for the mission house. His first attempt was to be made in the small German town of Straelen but it came to a sudden and abrupt end, as Fr. Hermann Fischer reports in his biography of Arnold Janssen: Brother Juniperus “had just been led to the first farmer by the parish priest, and introduced, when a policeman entered.” It was the time of the Kulturkampf [cultural battle] and religious were forbidden by law to beg for alms. The farmer quickly invited the policeman for a cup of coffee and asked him to sit next to Brother Juniperus who was dressed in civilian clothes. “The two men entertained each other; and the man in uniform, being a guest in the house, could not bring himself to be so impolite as to arrest the Brother. Right in the midst of the conversation, Brother Juniperus rose and, accompanied by a member of the family, went to a neighbor. Twice that same afternoon at different farms he met the policeman, who eyed the suspicious-looking stranger with the long beard with ever-increasing distrust.

“In the evening, the report reached the parish house that, at a meeting of the village council, a ‘liberal’ citizen had made the ‘awful’ revelation that, most probably, a disguised monk was going through the place and begging the people for alms, and was in consequence ‘infringing on the laws of the land.’ The police had received orders to arrest the dangerous individual the following day. When the policeman arrived next morning at eight o'clock, he was informed that the disguised monk had left and crossed the Dutch border, at six.”

“Naturally, Fr. Arnold was very much disappointed when Br. Juniperus told him the story. What to do now? But then, a week later, a wagon from

Straelen stopped in front of the mission house bringing 30 hundredweight of potatoes. The valiant farmers had heard that a begging religious had been chased out of their community. In honest indignation they said: Now more than ever! And they contributed a good load of potatoes“ (Hermann Fischer, *Arnold Janssen*, Steyl 1919, p. 130 and H. Fischer, transl. Frederick M. Lynk, SVD., *Life of Arnold Janssen*, Techny, Mission Press, 1925, pp. 151-152).

Another begging tour, at Kempen was left undisturbed by the police and was so successful that the mission house had enough food for several months to come (see *ibid.*).

Once four priests from Germany paid a surprise visit to the mission house. Jokingly they asked Fr. Arnold about the first missionaries for China and teased him quite a bit because he had none ready yet. Fr. Arnold invited his guests for a cup of coffee and served them while he remained standing. They repeatedly asked him to sit down with them. Finally he could not conceal the fact any longer that there wasn't another chair in the house. Then the teasing stopped and a few days later a dozen chairs arrived as a donation (H. Fischer, *Arnold Janssen*, Steyl 1919, p. 128).

### Desk-Bed

The carpenter Heinrich Erlemann had joined the mission house to become a missionary priest. However, his first job was to make furniture, including beds. At first, until Erlemann had made enough beds, the residents slept on straw mattresses which were placed on the floor. Rector Janssen was the last one to get a bed. He had Erlemann make a wooden bed box with a lid that could be opened so that he could use it as a desk at the same time. He still used this very simple piece of furniture when he had already been superior general of a large congregation for some time” (*ibid.*, pp. 127-128).

A person who lived in Steyl recalled: “In the first onths after the founding of the mission seminary, he [Fr. Arnold] sometimes came to the school to ask whether

some of the children were willing to help fold and pack the *Little Messenger of the Sacred Heart*. We did this work in Rector Janssen's room on a table the top of which was not firmly fixed.



One of our group was very curious and discovered that the tabletop could be lifted up. What could be underneath? We raised the top – and to our embarrassment saw the pitifully poor bed of Rector Janssen! We became very quiet”

(Bornemann, *Remembering Arnold Janssen*, *Analecta SVD*- 42, Rome 1978, pp. 68-69)

### Willing to make sacrifices

Fr. Arnold expected his companions to be willing to make sacrifices regarding the simplicity of life in the mission house, as well as regarding the religious exercises. The common morning and evening prayer was prayed kneeling on the stone floor, “and the rector's prayers usually lasted very long. From his childhood he had been in the habit of saying a long night prayer. Brother Juniperus once remarked that it was rather exhausting to kneel so long on the cold stones. ‘Oh,’ said Father Janssen, ‘that's all for the benefit of the poor pagans, dear brother!’” (Hermann Fischer, *The Life of Arnold Janssen*, transl. Frederick M. Lynk S.V.D., Techny, Mission Press, 1925, p. 146).

### Fr. Bill arrives in Steyl – First Disagreements

Fr. Peter Bill, who at the time of the purchase of the new mission house on August 4, 1875 was registered as its owner, received his bishop's permission on September 10 to leave his parish and join the new mission house in Steyl. Erroneously he had announced his arrival for October 28, 1875, whereas he had really meant September 28. Therefore nobody expected him when he arrived in Steyl on September 28. In the December 2011 issue of “The Arnoldus Family Story” [sorry for the wrong date of 2012 then!] we got to know the inner difficulties which plagued Fr. Bill just before joining Steyl. In particular, he did not believe that Fr. Arnold was the right man for the foundation of the mission house. Only because his bishop had told him: ‘No one who puts his hand to the plow must look back’, he finally went to Steyl – with all his difficulties and problems. Therefore it does not come as a surprise that from the very first moment of his arrival in the mission house in Steyl he had difficulties with life there under Rector Janssen as his superior. In his memoirs we read:

“What touched me unpleasantly the first time I entered the house was the complete lack of order in everything, or the dissimilarity with everything I had seen, done and experienced so far: in the daily routine, the prayers and other exercises.” “Nowhere else had I found a morning or an evening prayer similar to those in Steyl; nor have I found one since. The same was true of the devotion of the Stations of the Cross. There was one formula, for instance, in honor of the Holy Angels in which scarcely anything was said about the sufferings of Christ. ... The Stations of the Cross were made immediately after the noonday meal. When I complained about this, the devotion was transferred to another time” (Bornemann, *Remembering Arnold Janssen*, p. 70).

Fr. Bill continues: “After morning prayer, during meditation Fr. Janssen prayed the prayers before Mass aloud from the missal ... Then the *Veni Creator* was sung; and immediately after that I had to begin saying my Holy Mass.