

after his; but then I hurried to Tegelen to attend the High Mass there, but this time I went by myself; no student accompanied me.

After my return from Tegelen I immediately went to Fr. Janssen, to explain my action and I first told him: When he had told me on Saturday night: Would you be so kind and say Mass tomorrow after mine, I had not known that he wanted to give me a strict command to do so; I had obeyed, not because he had told me to do so sub (under) or vi (by virtue of) obedience, but I kept silent – since being in the prayer room, immediately after evening prayer, in the presence of all the students, I had not been able to give an explanation without certainly causing offence – and in order to avoid greater evil. Fr. Janssen immediately grasped the opportunity and used it to ask me if I did not give him the right to command me sub or vi oboedientia. That expression: sub or vi oboedientia or under the rule of obedience intrigued me; I found it ambiguous. Did he mean.... the right of any secular or religious superior to give orders to his subjects? or the right of a superior of a religious congregation...? or the right of a religious superior to order something sub poenae peccati [under pain of sin] ..., which is indifferent in itself and in regard to the purpose and the house discipline of the congregation? And since both of us were a bit worked up and in order to avoid misunderstandings, I did not want to and I could not answer that question. I therefore replied: ‘Let us speak about it some other time.’ However, Fr. Janssen was more clever than I (not to say, more cunning) and he wanted to make use of the opportunity; he, therefore, pressed me into giving an answer and asked me repeatedly if I did not recognize him as my superior. Then I said in a short and appropriate way: “My spiritual superior right now is still my Bishop of Luxemburg..., who gave me permission to join you, Fr. Janssen, in order to found this work for the missions, and so (since the work is in the diocese of Roermond) for now I am subject to the jurisdiction of the Bishop of Roermond” (Bill, *Erinnerungen* [Memoirs], pp. 58-59).

FR. ARNOLD: “In response to this explanation I kept silent, but thought the matter over. Afterwards I had a conference in the presence of all three gentlemen...”.

#### **Fr. Arnold suffered very much under these tensions:**

**One can easily understand how I suffered under such conditions. How often did I sigh: ‘O Lord and God, how can this work ever succeed? This condition depressed me terribly and it is amazing that I did not get more sick than I already was. I visibly lost weight. ... On the other hand ... throughout the whole time I was given the feeling: now it has to become clear whether the enterprise is God’s work; if it is not, it may perish; but if it is God’s work He will know how to save and protect it.**



## **The Arnoldus Family Story**

### **FEBRUARY–MARCH 1876: A TIME OF GREAT TENSIONS**

The October 2012 issue of “The Arnoldus Family Story” told us about the tensions in the young mission house in Steyl. The opposing parties were: “On the one side Fr. Bill and the theology student Reichart and on the other side Rector Janssen and between them theology student Anzer. The controversial issues were the study and examination regulations in the mission house, the statutes which still had to be written, finally the authority of the rector regarding the discipline in the house...” (Fritz Bornemann SVD, *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, 1965, pp. 117-118).

In this issue of “The Arnoldus Family Story” we will look at those tensions which were caused by the discipline imposed in the house.

#### **THE DISCIPLINE IN THE HOUSE**

Even though Fr. Bill had to teach classes in the mission house, he “often took short trips to visit religious houses and educational institutions in Germany and Holland. The rector called attention to the classes he missed. Bill thought the classes could be made up. The rector then pointed out that Bill needed permission for such trips. Bill denied this; after all there were no statutes as yet and so he would not worry about the matter” (Bornemann, Arnold Janssen, transl. John Vogelsang, Rome 1975, p. 84).

Another sore point was the Mass schedule. Holy Mass was celebrated in the village church of Steyl which was situated just opposite the mission house. “Steyl,” Fr. Bill wrote in his memoirs, “is an annex of the parish of Tegelen where a chaplain is taking care of the pastoral needs. (Here people call him rector.) At the time, this Rector Backhuis suffered from a spinal cord disease and was unable to do pastoral work; he was glad that Fr. Janssen (or myself) did so in his place, particularly on Sundays,... I can’t recall anymore exactly how we celebrated our Masses on Sundays.... But one thing I still know: On Sundays, I – and at first the students as well, went to Tegelen (just a short half an hour’s walk) to attend the High Mass there, in order not to create a parish within the parish, and to give a good

example and in order to gain the favor of the parish priests who were not all that favorably disposed towards us” (Fr. Peter Bill, *Erinnerungen* [memoirs], unpublished manuscript, p. 57). Against this background we must see the following dispute of March 4, 1876.

For Fr. Arnold, Mass schedule, permission for travel and regular classes were not so much matters of the statutes, but “were matters of order for which he was responsible. In his view, it was a matter of one’s ability to adapt oneself to community life, and to the rector’s authority” (Bornemann, Arnold Janssen, transl. John Vogelsang, Rome 1975, p. 84); after all, in August 1875, Fr. Bill and seminarian Reichart had elected him rector and superior – even though only provisionally. In order to get an independent opinion regarding these issues, Fr. Arnold wrote to the Rector of the Mill Hill Mission Seminary on February 26, 1876 asking these questions:

“1. Can the subordinates and the teachers leave the house or make visits without permission?”

“2. Can the superior order them to undertake spiritual tasks or perform priestly functions such as celebrate Mass, preach, etc.?”

“3. Can he supervise all the classes in the house?” ...

Fr. Benoit, the Rector of Mill Hill answered on February 29, 1876:

“Ad 1) The subordinates can in no way leave the house without permission. The teachers can make visits without permission, but they must inform me beforehand if they foresee that they will be absent for a meal.

“Ad 2) The legal issue has not yet arisen. - A distinction had to be made between the teachers who belonged to the Society and those who did not. - ‘The subordinate priests, deacons, etc., are strictly obliged to perform every ecclesiastical function when ordered to do so by the superior.’ Of course, the others were more free.

“Ad 3) Naturally, the religion classes are divided among the teachers. Religious instruction is given by the superior and the director helps him with the supervision.” ... (Alt, *Journey in faith*, transl. F. Mansfield, J. Mulberge, Steyler Verlag Nettetal 2002, p. 99).

On March 4, 1876 the dispute broke out openly. Let us see how Fr. Arnold and Fr. Bill described the event: Fr. Arnold in his memoirs, which he had narrated to Fr. Reinke, and Fr. Bill in his memoirs, which he himself had written. However, we must be aware that Fr. Arnold spoke about this event in 1899 when he told Fr. Reinke the story of his life; Fr. Bill started to write down his memoirs only after the death of Fr. Arnold – from about April 1910 on (Bornemann, ed., transl. John Vogelsang, Remembering Arnold Janssen, Rome 1978, p. 421).

**FR. ARNOLD:** In the Netherlands it is Church law that when holy Mass is celebrated on Sundays at a fixed time, most of the time a short homily pro populo [for the people] is to be given during that Mass. I said Mass in the Steyl church.

The rector of the church suffered from a serious disease of his legs and could not do pastoral work. I also preached as well as I could in Dutch for the people. Fr. Bill said Mass usually before I did. One Sunday [sic!] I told him, that in consideration of that law it was necessary that once in a while he should say Mass after my Mass instead of before it. He replied that he would think about it. (Reinke, *Erinnerungen von Arnold Janssen* [memoirs of Fr. Arnold Janssen], No. 3353; the following descriptions of this event by Fr. Arnold are all taken from this number).

**FR. BILL:** March 4, 1876, Saturday evening after the Rosary, Fr. Janssen told me in the sacristy of the church in Steyl: “Will you be so kind and tomorrow (Sunday) say the Mass after mine?”

Was this a question, an advice or a command? I for my part did not consider it a command. Therefore I told him: ‘I shall think the matter over,’ to which Fr. Arnold did not say anything (Bill, *Erinnerungen* [Memoirs], p. 57-58).

**FR. ARNOLD:** “I did not think it necessary to pay any attention to this deliberation and in the evening I published the Mass schedule for the following day.”

**FR. BILL:** [Since Fr. Janssen had not said anything to my reservations] “I was taken completely by surprise when after evening prayer Fr. Janssen turned round and said: ‘Tomorrow the Reverend pastor will celebrate his Mass after mine’” (Bill, *Erinnerungen* [Memoirs], p. 58).

**FR. ARNOLD:** “Fr. Bill interrupted me and said, I should, please, not decide that.”

**FR. BILL** gives different reasons for having interrupted Fr. Arnold: for instance, he did not have sufficient knowledge of the Dutch language in order to preach in Dutch as Fr. Arnold did; furthermore: “and when I said my Mass before or after his, then all people could have Mass in Steyl and no one would have to go to the parish church in Tegelen; they, therefore, would be stopped from attending the parish Mass. Therefore I answered Fr. Arnold completely relaxed and calmly: ‘I have thought the matter over and I wanted to talk with you about it; I would like to celebrate the Mass at another time.’ – I thought, at a time when the people would not be stopped from going to the parish church in Tegelen and they as well as we, the students and myself, could comfortably go to Tegelen to attend the High Mass, or had to go in order to hear a holy Mass. ... About these and similar matters I would have liked to have talked with Fr. Janssen” (Bill, *Erinnerungen* [Memoirs], p. 58).

**FR. ARNOLD:** “I replied it would be good if the given order would be adhered to.”

**FR. BILL** who had wanted to discuss different points regarding Sunday Mass with Fr. Arnold: “I was therefore flabbergasted when Fr. Arnold said in a severe and sharp tone: ‘I command you under obedience to celebrate your Mass tomorrow after mine.’ And he added also: ‘We would receive greater blessing from God and could achieve our salvation more certainly if we acted with humility and obedience’...”

The next day, Sunday, (March 5) I said my Mass, as Fr. Janssen had demanded,