

How enlightened is holy humility! A humble person recognises that he is nothing and that everything that is good about him and in him is a pure gift of God's grace, but that everything which disfigures these gifts of God in him and stains them, is his work and character.

How truth-loving and unselfish is humility. The humble person gives honor to God in everything. He takes the crown which God gave him off his head and places it at the feet of the One who made it.

How great is humility. The humble person treads underfoot his own wrongness and vain desire for honor. He chains the devil of pride which ever since the first fall slumbers secretly in every human being. He overcomes himself and the world and the devil in him and he stands there as the victor whom the world cannot influence either with honor or with shame, neither with praise nor with rebuke, as long as he knows that he is within the holy will of God. Humility was a striking virtue of the Queen of Angels who said: "I am the handmaid of the Lord," and it is also a striking virtue of the prince of angels, our third principal patron, whose name is 'Michael', that is 'Who is like God?'

So may this holy virtue which is the special inheritance of the children of God become also our heritage. May Mary help us graciously towards that. For that we will fervently pray to her during this month dedicated to her and which we spend for the first time in the newly established mission house".

These words are followed by a prayer for humility which sounds like a program for the new period in the life of the mission house which began in May 1876. The prayer reads:

"Give us humility, Mother blest!
Make us pure of heart! .
May we strive for God alone,
Serve him faithfully with all our heart;
Seeking nothing but his honour,
Shrinking totally from our own!
Self-contempt will be our striving,
While humiliation appears mild!
Grant simplicity and wisdom,
Create us anew in the image of Jesus. ...
See, we are your children
And St. Michael bears the standard.
Be you, therefore, our dearest Mother!
Lead us in the path of humility!"



The Arnoldus Family Story

A look into Arnold Janssen's heart

In the May issue of "The Arnoldus Family Story" we saw how Arnold Janssen parted from his first two co-workers, Bill and Reichart. We also heard of the reconciliation between them. With regard to Franz Xavier Reichart, Fr. Arnold wrote to him in May 1903, 27 years after the separation: "If you so desire it, you will find a place with us in eternity"; that meant a place in the midst of the whole Steyl family in heaven! Yet, did Fr. Arnold think like that also on that April 20, 1876 when Reichart left Steyl because he had dismissed him?

We see how Fr. Arnold felt in those days from a letter which he wrote on April 23, 1876 to the Picpus Missionary Jacob Bund: "The blow which only a few months ago would have been so terribly hard, but which now is like a release from a nightmare, has come at last. I had to dismiss Mr. Reichart as someone who no longer had a vocation for our work. A little later, I was also obliged to part with Father Bill who already for a very long time had been undecided and who finally, in spite of my having forbidden it, left our house for several days to go on a journey, after I had explained to him that I would consider his going as a departure from the mission house. Now I can breathe more easily; for I have suffered a great deal this winter.

Nevertheless, it is a heavy blow, and all the more so since Anzer, the other theologian from Bavaria, is also very much affected. Mr. Reichart will go to Louvain, and no doubt you will hear more about it then. Opposition arose chiefly against two points – namely, the cultivation of the sciences, as a secondary purpose, and the third rule of St. Dominic. I did not give in, because I realized that the whole opposition did not arise from a good spirit and that both points had been contained in a basic document (letter to the Most Rev. Archbishop of Cologne, a copy of which had been submitted to many German bishops). *In cruce salus!* [In the cross is salvation!] I am glad that I have also had to drink from the Lord's chalice of suffering. Now the foundation will be laid much deeper with regard to the spirit and piety. – Pray for us!

The Latin students give me much joy. Perhaps I have to continue building the work on them. Amongst them are some who possess the true spirit of mortification and piety. '*L'union fait la force!*' (In union there is strength) For that

reason our aim could not be reached with the men we have had with us up to this time. However, now I face the task alone. You may well imagine that it is often hard for me to keep my courage up. Yet the Lord may allow me to flounder around so long as it pleases him. May his holy will be done always. If our work is not his doing, it is better that it fail – and the sooner the better" (Hermann Fischer SVD, Arnold Janssen, transl. Frederick M. Lynk, Techy 1925, pp. 199-200; changes in the translation are taken from Alt, *Journey in Faith*, p. 115 and JO).

The departure of Bill and Reichart had also become known to the people of Steyl. Many years later Fr. Arnold remembered: "When the people of Steyl and the neighborhood heard of the departure of the two men, they said: 'This is the end! The mission house will not succeed!' But I said, 'Thank God, I am beginning to hope again!'" (Hermann Fischer SVD, Arnold Janssen, transl. Frederick M. Lynk, p. 199).

We see his hope in an article in honour of our Lady which Fr. Arnold published in the May 1876 issue of his mission magazine "Kleiner Herz-Jesu-Bote" (Little Messenger of the Sacred Heart); the title of the article reads:

"The Mission House's petition to the dear Mother of God in May"

(Maibitte des Missionshauses an die liebe Gottesmutter)

On the first page of the May 1875 issue of the "Kleiner Herz-Jesu-Bote" (Little Messenger of the Sacred Heart) Arnold Janssen had published a "Prayer for the German mission house". Its subtitle reads: "At the feet of Mary, a prayer of consecration offered by the future residents on the occasion of her month of May 1875". In May 1876 Fr. Arnold began his article with this prayer. He put very special emphasis on the last verse of that prayer: 'We do not see it [the mission house] yet with our eyes...' Then Fr. Arnold continued: "*In the meantime the possibility has become reality; the resolution a deed, the mere thought has become a work which stands before us. What we did not see before our eyes at that time [1875], we now see standing in front of us. On the friendly banks of a lovely river, the holy Mother of God has prepared a pleasant home for us. It is true, the house is still small and inadequate, still far from what it must become before it is fit for its purpose. Yet that is a fault which will hopefully be improved as time goes on. What is important first of all is the location and that is such as we could not wish a better. And therefore we have reason to give thanks to the holy Mother of God for all she has given us until now; and for the future we will unwaveringly trust in her continued help. The holy Mother of God is one of our principal patrons and we can hardly express in words the confidence and hope which fills us that she will watch over our house with holy attentiveness and that when the time comes she will give us with fatherly and motherly concern everything necessary. ... Since during last year's month of May we fervently prayed to the holy Mother of God in order to recommend to her the work which was then only at a preparatory stage, we will not fail now to entrust to her heart*

in the current month of May the work which has already begun. And so we implore the Queen of Heaven to look with eyes of grace and mercy upon the house which is dedicated to her. Even though the seed has now grown into a small plant which has put forth the first leaves and buds, both, leaves and buds are still tender and need the protection of the holy Mother of God. May she, the most blessed, protect us under her mantle and ask fervently on our behalf for those virtues which our house needs most in order to reach its lofty goal."

This "lofty goal" demanded of the men who joined the mission house very special virtues – and therefore Arnold Janssen was not interested in having the mission house filled as fast as possible with many people. He wrote: "Perhaps some people would consider it desirable that it [the mission house] would grow quickly in the number of persons and in its outward expansion. But that is definitely not our opinion. Our opinion is that our house must most of all grow in its inner spirit and virtue. For a missionary in a pagan land can only then do a decent job, when he is properly enlightened, pious and holy. Therefore our house must be built on striving for perfection and that must be the foundation which will be laid first and foremost. May the Mother of Holiness help us in that and may she send us such people who come here to work first of all for their own sanctification."

Fr. Arnold then complains that in "the present time" (1876!) people talked and criticised a lot and that the spirit of the times promoted the self-exaltation of their own judgment and that companionship with God, humbling of oneself and the striving for perfection were neglected. And then he exclaims: "How different was everything with Mary! She was to become the Mother of Holiness, the Seat of Wisdom, the Ark of the Covenant, the rescue of the human race. And she began with that by not having any other desire except that God would be pleased with her and by serving the highest good with the innocence and simplicity of a humble heart. But God made out of her what she was to be according to His will. ... Therefore, at the beginning of May we will fervently ask the holy Mother of God that she may give us as the most precious treasure, not money and possessions, not honour and pleasure, nor such goods which are most important to the world, but those virtues of hers which make us like God."

Regarding money, Fr. Arnold quickly added: "Money is certainly something which you cannot do without it in this world, and any holy work needs it as well, and often to a very high degree. However, we will not worry too much about money and remember the words of Jesus: "Strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well," (Mt 6:36) ...

Finally, Fr. Arnold asks: "For which virtues shall we ask the holy Mother of God in particular during this month of May?" His answer: "When you build a building you must first lay a good foundation. Therefore we will choose that virtue which is called the foundation of all other virtues and that is holy humility.