

beer. He endures his pains with great patience. You certainly must not think that his sufferings will disturb the community or make him unfit to carry out the tasks of his vocation. I close with the 'Ceterum Censeo' [For the rest, I think] that you will accept him and that you won't so soon find another one as suitable as he is. You would do well to drop him a few lines."

On May 22, 1876 Fr. Arnold answered Wegener's letter and wrote among other things: "You know the goal of our house. So if you come to dedicate your life and energy for this noble purpose in a harmonious association and in trustful dependence on the superior of the house, desiring perfection and striving to die ever more to yourself, then I welcome you with all my heart. My brother John can inform you about the house. If your stomach cannot tolerate black rye bread, we will have to supply you with white bread. Furthermore, unless unforeseen circumstances demand otherwise, you will begin your life in the house by living humbly and alone with God for one year in the novitiate so that you can grow somewhat more in the spirit and become accustomed to the spirit of the house" (Alt, *Journey in Faith*, p. 127-128).

At the end of May Fr. Arnold wrote to his brother John:

"You will be welcome as my auxiliary worker and through your presence in the house you hopefully will make it possible to start a novitiate in the house... Without such a novitiate nothing will ever become of our house." The priority, so Fr. Arnold emphasized, was always to be the formation of the future members "in a spirit of solitude with God." "That is our first task." In this sense he had also written to Wegener...". [The restructuring of] our extension building is making good progress and is becoming quite beautiful and we have the wish to offer holy Mass in our house on June 16" (SVD Generalate, Arnold Janssen Archives 51019, transcription Franz Bosold SVD).

On June 2, 1876 the major seminary in Münster was forced to close. That same day John Janssen and Hermann Jos. Wegener went by train to Venlo. Fr. Arnold relates: "I picked them up at the railway station and brought them to Steyl after a meal with friends in Venlo. Now the house began to liven up" (Alt, *Journey in Faith*, p. 127).

The Sisters of Divine Providence

During the Kulturkampf the German Sisters of Divine Providence were expelled from their convent in Muenster. The Sisters had been able to buy a place in Steyl for a new convent. They agreed to send two Sisters at first to look after the kitchen and laundry. "On Tuesday, 8 June 1876, Father Janssen introduced Sisters Veronica and Philomena, who had performed similar services at the Borromaeum in Muenster, to their work" (Bornemann, Arnold Janssen, transl. John Vogelsang, Rome 1975, p. 111).



The Arnoldus Family Story

In June you received the last edition of "The Arnoldus Family Story". That time we had a look into Fr. Arnold's heart and we saw how the separation from two of his first co-workers, Fr. Bill and seminarian Reichart, had affected him. On the one hand it had been a "blow" for him, but on the other hand he felt "like released from a nightmare". While the people of Steyl said: "This is the end! The mission house will not succeed!" – Fr. Arnold said: "Thank God, I am beginning to hope again." He was not mistaken as the following development of the mission house shows.

A NEW BEGINNING

When Fr. Bill and seminarian Reichart left Steyl it was not clear at all what seminarian John Baptist Anzer would do. However, he stayed and together with him Fr. Arnold made a new beginning.

Statutes

In March 1876 Bishop Paredis of Roermond had urged that statutes for the mission house should be drawn up as soon as possible. On May 8, 1876 Fr. Arnold and John Baptist Anzer began their deliberations regarding those statutes. "Between 8 May and 5 June 1876, Arnold Janssen and Anzer worked out 'the Statutes of St. Michael's Mission House in Steyl', with a small addition from 15 June 1877" (Alt, *Journey in Faith*, p. 124).

Renovation of the Building



The house which Fr. Arnold had bought consisted of a two storey building and a "one-story extension which "held a stable with lavatory, a barn with threshing floor, the brewery granary with a cellar, and the brewery itself" (ibid., p. 155). In January 1876 the brewery became the printing press. After that, that is during the time

of the dispute between Fr. Arnold and his co-workers and later while Fr. Arnold and Anzer were writing the statutes, this extension was restructured: “the stable became a large room which first served as study hall and library...; the barn and threshing floor became an oratory” (ibid., p. 155-156).

New Co-Workers

Two members of the mission house had left in April 1876; two new ones were to join the mission house a short while later: Fr. Arnold’s youngest brother John Janssen and his friend and fellow seminarian Hermann Wegener.

(Unless stated otherwise the sources for the following are Hermann Fischer SVD, Vater Arnolds Getreuen, Steyl, 1925 and its English version: Paul G. La Forge SVD, The Trusted Companions of Saint Arnold Janssen, Published for the Internet, Rome, November 2012).

John Janssen

“The eighth child of my parents was Johann,” relates the founder of Steyl, “it seems that the good God has sent him to help me. I brought him up from Baptism as his godfather and sent him to study later on.” Johann or John, as we will call him from now on, was born on the 15th of October 1853. “But the young world citizen was so frail that his parents took him to be baptized on the same day. He received the name Johann Frederick: Johann in honor of the bishop of Münster [Johann Georg Müller], and Frederick, in honor of the King [of Prussia], Frederick Wilhelm, on whose birthday Johann was born”. From early childhood on John wanted to become a priest. When he was eleven years old, Fr. Arnold told his parents that he would let his younger brother, his godchild, study at his own expense. From 1867 on John attended the minor seminary / high school at Gaesdonck, near Goch where Fr. Arnold also had done his high school studies. In 1872 John graduated from high school.

“Meanwhile, his health became a major concern of his mother and his relatives. He had weak lungs” and the thin and tall young man gave the impression of being a candidate for tuberculosis. “His frequent coughing of blood strengthened this impression and caused worry among his relatives.

It did not seem reasonable to allow his immediate entry into the very strict routine of a theological residence in Münster. A break was necessary”.

So Fr. Arnold who, since the death of their father in 1870 had taken the father’s place for John, decided that John should now enter the University of Bonn to take up philosophical studies. In Bonn life was not as strict as in the seminary and so John recovered so well that after a year he was able to enter the Collegium Borromäum in Muenster [seminary like residence for priesthood candidates] in order to take up his theological studies there.

The immediate preparation for his priestly ordination began on October 19, 1875 when he entered the major seminary in Muenster. In March 1876 he received the Minor Orders, ordination to Subdiaconate and Diaconate. Priestly ordination was planned for the summer; however, it was the time of the Kulturkampf (cultural battle) and the major seminary was forced to close by the Prussian State on June 2, 1876.

For quite some time John had been thinking of helping his brother in Steyl. In the

meantime he wanted to see how the Kulturkampf against the church would develop. He had been sharing his thoughts with his fellow seminarians hoping that the one or other would join him, and one of them indeed showed interest in doing so: Hermann Wegener.

Hermann Wegener

Hermann Wegener was born on October 18, 1850 in the farming village of Polsum/Westfalia. On October 22 he was baptised and received the names Johann Hermann Joseph. His father Joseph Wegener was an inn-keeper, farmer and owner of a distillery. After the death of his first wife who had given birth to nine children, he married Maria Friederika Heuman who gave birth to six children. Hermann was the third child from this marriage. When Hermann was five years old his mother died and five years later his father died as well.

From childhood on his wish had been to become a priest; since his parents were dead, his older siblings paid for his studies. In 1872 he graduated from High School. He had been examined in 10 subjects and the marks he received were “Outstanding” for six of them, and “Good” for the other four.

In Muenster he studied philosophy and theology. In the autumn of 1875 he entered the Major Seminary. Like John Janssen he received the Minor Orders, ordination to Subdiaconate and Diaconate in March 1876. Since the closure of the seminary by the Prussian State was imminent he wondered what he was to do and he prayed for a sign from God; and God did give him a sign as Wegener himself relates:

“I had previously heard about the foundation of the mission seminary many times and about its goals, but I had not had yet the slightest prompting to look there for a small place for my activity and to cooperate in the tasks of this house. Meanwhile the danger to be expelled from the seminary drew nearer and nearer. One morning Johann Janssen came to my room. Very soon, a conversation arose about the closing of our seminary. ‘What are you going to do’, I asked my friend, ‘when we have to leave this seminary?’ ‘I am going to my brother’s at Steyl,’ and he added: ‘Would you like to come along?’ The question seemed to be the answer to my previous prayer about the knowledge of the will of God. It struck my soul like a flash of lightning: ‘This is the answer to my prayer! God wants you in Steyl!’ I answered my friend immediately that I would go to Steyl with him. I had no other consideration, no doubts”.

On May 17, 1876 Wegener applied in writing to Fr. Arnold in Steyl and asked his friend John to forward the letter to Fr. Arnold. This John did and also included his own recommendation:

“Perhaps you will remember that Wegener about whom I had previously written and about whom we spoke during the vacation. ... He is a model of piety ... Secondly, he is very talented ...

However, he does have one drawback. He has suffered for many years from a stomach ailment. As a consequence, he cannot eat any dark bread nor can he drink