

Fr. Rouard summarised his thoughts about Fr. Arnold in these words: “I am convinced that the work will never develop under his leadership. Perhaps it is the mission of Fr. Janssen to begin the work. I have noticed how God often uses people’s shortcomings, taking their good qualities to reach the goal he has set. Through his activity, zeal and numerous connections Fr. Janssen can bring in the money and build the seminary, etc. Then someone else, a more level-headed person, can relieve him and carry on from there. In the meantime, the Order can encourage individual members to join the Third Order and postpone an approbation or final amalgamation. From this perspective, my visit will not have been in vain. ...” (*ibid.*).

On August 10, 1876 Fr. Rouard wrote also to Arnold Janssen himself: “I am afraid that your leadership is too strict. – It is good not to follow nature but nature, too, has its rights. – It is good to teach students how to live with privations but you owe it to them to exercise caution and to care for their good health. Above all, avoid discouragement that could arise in some candidates from too strict a leadership. I also feel that hygiene in your house could be improved. That is a prerequisite for health, a sign of internal purity, and can well be reconciled with poverty. Why do you not allow napkins during meals? They are allowed in the strictest orders. And why take your meals so quickly – in ten to twelve minutes? You surely realize how important and influential small things can be for greater matters” (*ibid.*, p. 98).

Fr. Rouard as well as all the other critics of Fr. Arnold overlooked in their criticisms “the possibility that the founder of the seminary might grow and mature as the project itself progressed” (Bornemann, transl. John Vogelsang, *Arnold Janssen*, Manila 1975, p. 93); and Fr. Arnold did grow with his foundation, but not automatically. One of his secretaries, Fr. Hilger wrote regarding Fr. Arnold’s fraternal charity that it was not a natural gift, but a virtue “acquired in life’s hard-fought battle”. Only his close associates witnessed that his fraternal charity was “acquired only after a hard struggle in which he bravely conquered his native harshness and lack of consideration” (Anton Hilger, “Zum 50. Jahrestag der Gründung der S.V.D.” [For the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the foundation of the S.V.D.] in: Peter McHugh, ed., *Arnold Janssen, Yesterday and Today*, *Analecta SVD* – 63/III, Rome 1998, p. 59). Fr. Arnold “worked on bettering himself until old age. He used God’s chisel on himself and in a special way he showed both endurance and untiring effort, the like of which one seldom finds today” (Anton Hilger, “Zum 100. Geburtstag Arnold Janssens” (1937) [For the 100<sup>th</sup> birthday of Arnold Janssen], in: *ibid.*, p. 65).



## The Arnoldus Family Story

### JULY 1876

Already in March 1876 Arnold Janssen had informed the readers of the “*Kleiner Herz-Jesu-Bote*” (Little Messenger of the Sacred Heart) about the necessity of a new building in Steyl. In July 1876 he decided to begin with it. Fr. Arnold’s brother, Capuchin Brother Juniperus Janssen writes:

“The Rector had frequent conferences with Hermann Wegener, John Janssen and John Baptist Anzer. The former two were deacons, the latter a subdeacon. The topic of their discussion was the new building” (Bornemann, ed., *Remembering Arnold Janssen, Analecta SVD* – 42, Rome 1978, p. 84). In summer 1876 the mission house “received a rather more substantial financial donation on condition that the interest would go to the donor for the rest of his life. The calculation of the costs of the new building showed that they had possibly 1/15<sup>th</sup> of the necessary amount of money. So the decision was made to start with the building” (Hermann auf der Heide, *Die Missionsgesellschaft von Steyl, Ein Bild der ersten 25 Jahre ihres Bestehens*, [The Mission Society of Steyl, a Portrait of the first 25 Years of its Existence], Steyl 1900, p. 61). It was “the beginning of July 1876 ... Soon the bricks began to arrive. Farmers, mostly from Belfeld [a village near Steyl] hauled them free of charge. All day long, except during class hours, the students had to unload the bricks and also haul away the dirt excavated from the foundation” (Bornemann, *Remembering Arnold Janssen*, p. 84).

In the August 1876 issue of the *Little Messenger of the Sacred Heart* Fr. Arnold wrote:

“At the present moment it is above all necessary to build. A soul needs the body in order to live in it and to grow in and with the body. And so we also need the necessary rooms in order to live in them and to carry out our pious exercises and studies – and how much does a school need for 50 people already! Therefore we are going to build in the name of God and of Jesus. Until now we have done some work in the old adjacent building in order to accept a few more students towards autumn.

“In the month of August we will begin with the new wing. A certain amount of bricks has already been brought to our place and there is sufficient quicklime to

begin with. And so we begin in God's name. Even though there is only a little money and we do not need many keys to protect our money from thieves, the Lord still has huge treasure boxes. Trust [in God], however, is a key to them. May we never, ever lack this trust! The Lord will show that He is rich enough and that we never trust in him in vain.

"But now we will implore the **Queen of Heaven** whose memory is celebrated during this month of August. May she help! For we build also for heaven, to populate it with immortal souls which otherwise would be lost. Usually people build on earth mainly only for the earth. Yet, hasn't the kingdom of heaven come down upon the earth! Therefore we must work and build on earth also for heaven. And so may the hardworking hands come which lay stone upon stone until the house is completed. And may the pious donors come who place the stones into the hands of the workers, so that in honour of our holy patrons a new house of God will rise up! Great and holy is its destiny. May it be achieved! We, however, dedicate our house to our holy patrons. We implore and promise them that if they grant us its completion, we will also put in the front of the completed building the words: Regi angelorum! Dominae angelorum! Principi angelorum! That means: To the King of Angels! To the Queen of Angels! To the Prince of Angels! (The main patrons of our house are: the divine Heart of Jesus, the immaculate Heart of Mary and the holy archangel Michael.)

**"Therefore, you holy angels come and help us build!** And once the house is completed, then you too will move in and see to it that those who live in it will live, work, and sanctify themselves with angelic manners and an angelic mind and with your help will spread God's holy kingdom, in defiance of Satan, in your honour, for the salvation of the church and for the joy and consolation of all pious Christians. Amen."

## AUGUST 1876

### *A further building*

Even before Fr. Arnold began to build a new tract, the mission house got another house. It was the storehouse of the Ronck family which Fr. Arnold had bought in August 1875. However, according to the purchase contract he could only use it from August 1876 on. On "1 August, Mr Ronck, in accordance with the contract, transferred the well-preserved storehouse" to Fr. Arnold. "It now housed the typesetting department, the press and the bindery, as well as the carpentry shop of Heinrich Erlemann and the smithy" (cf Bornemann, transl. John Vogelsang, *Arnold Janssen*, Manila 1975, p. 102).

### *New Criticism of Fr. Arnold*

About the same time that Fr. Arnold wrote his article for the August issue of the *Little Messenger of the Sacred Heart* quoted above, which testified to Fr.

Arnold's optimism and deep trust in God's providence, the mission house received an important visitor who criticised Fr. Arnold severely. The visitor was Dominican Fr. Rouard de Card. He made one "of the severest criticisms, not so much about the undertaking as such but about the man at its head" (Alt, *Journey in Faith*, p. 96). Fr. Arnold had been in contact with him for some time "in connection with the possible association with the Dominican Third Order" (*ibid.*). Fr. Rouard visited Steyl perhaps towards the end of July or in the first week of August, for on August 7, 1876 he wrote a report about his visit to his Superior General in Rome.

Before meeting Fr. Arnold in Steyl, he paid a visit to the Bishop of Roermond. To his Superior General he wrote: "Passing through Roermond, I introduced myself to his Lordship the Bishop, to ask his blessing and tell him about Fr. Janssen's wish. He seemed to like this plan most of all because Fr. Janssen, a very pious man, lacked the gifts of wisdom, tact and discernment required to direct such an important enterprise. He is far too strict and because of his exaggerated mysticism, he has discouraged many excellent priests who had joined his institute" (*ibid.*, p. 97).

Fr. Rouard also heard similar negative judgements in Steyl. He continues his report:

"I soon experienced the truth of this. I found the house situated in a good spot on the banks of the Maas with a large garden where it will be easy to add more buildings, also a fine building plan. They have no difficulty obtaining money. Yet, under the pretence of getting his missionaries accustomed to privation, Fr. Janssen does not give his seminarians enough to eat. You can judge that by the midday meal which I shared: a very thin soup and one course consisting of a mixture of potatoes and meat; we had water to drink; there were no napkins to wipe our mouths; the meal was over in ten to twelve minutes" (*ibid.*). Even Fr. Arnold's brother, recently ordained Fr. John Janssen, complained about his brother to Fr. Rouard: "The brother of the rector, a young, very pious and very prudent priest who is a teacher in the house, came to me and asked me to speak to Fr. Janssen. He added that it was impossible for him to persevere under such a superior.

The opportunity soon arose because Fr. Janssen wished to know what the Bishop had said to me. I told him, soft-peddling the language somewhat. Fr. Janssen then changed the subject.

"On this occasion, I was happy he did not insist on an immediate association of his order with ours. He said he wanted to think the matter over and pray, so that he could discern the will of God, and discuss the statutes in a conference with his colleagues, which I fully agreed to. I was content to admit him alone into the Third Order of St. Dominic" (*ibid.*). Father Janssen "was invested with the scapular, and under the name of Frater Thomas, he became a novice of the Third Order. Father Rouard delegated to him the authority to dispense himself and all members of the community from the obligations of the Third Order" (Bornemann, transl. John Vogelsang, *Arnold Janssen*, Manila 1975, p. 97).