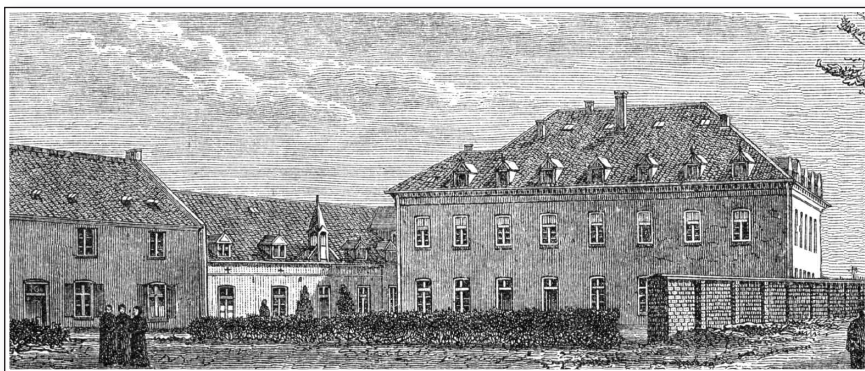


illuminated. "It was a beautiful, magnificent view." The band "Fanfare" accompanied the bishop from Tegelen station to the mission house. Crowds of people surrounded the Episcopal carriage. Coming near to the mission house, the bishop left the carriage. A student welcomed him in Latin to which the bishop responded in the same way. The next morning, the feast of St. Michael, the chapel was blessed and shortly afterwards the Pontifical Mass began. The sermon was preached by Fr. Martinus Poell, a Dutch missionary in Hupe. ... With fitting words he described what a church or chapel is and what it is to be and what it is to be particularly for this house. He spoke words of encouragement for the priests and students of the house, as well as for all his listeners. He expressed it frankly: Many and great things have already happened in that short time of the institution's existence. But gratitude for it is not owed to people, but it is the Lord God who has to be thanked; for it is He who has done it.

"Immediately after the solemn High Mass, the forty hours adoration began in order to implore God's grace for our house through which alone one can receive and give blessings." (*Kleiner Herz-Jesu-Bote* [Little Messenger of the Sacred Heart], October 1877)

"The new chapel was 10 meters long and 6.5 meters wide. It was two stories high, 'had big windows, three altars and an organ loft'. ... However, the kneelers had no seats, the aisle was narrow, and the places around the altar were so cramped that there was no room for a solemn liturgy" (Josef Alt, *Journey in Faith*, p. 159). It was hoped that the chapel would be big enough for many years to come. However, it lasted only a few years until in 1883 the Lower Church and a year later the Upper Church took its place.

When on October 5, 1877 the retreat for priests ended, the time had come, so Fr. Arnold wrote, "to use the new building for ourselves and to call in the students who have been accepted. Accordingly the new school year will begin on Monday, October 15 and the students accepted have to arrive here on the Saturday before that date" (*Kleiner Herz-Jesu-Bote* [Little Messenger of the Sacred Heart], October 1877).



Steyl 1877 with first new building



The Arnoldus Family Story

DONATIONS

Visitors to Steyl are amazed at the many buildings which Fr. Arnold had built and they ask how he had been able to finance them. As we know from the previous edition of the "Arnoldus Family Story", a first answer is: trust in God. Fr. Arnold had no doubt whatsoever that God would inspire many generous donors to support the new mission house. And he was not wrong. The appeals for donations which he published in his mission magazine "*Kleiner Herz-Jesu-Bote*" (Little Messenger of the Sacred Heart) were successful. Month after month his readers were informed about the donations which had been received, some rather small ones from poor people or some bigger ones from better off people, from lay men and women as well as from priests and pious associations.

Among the donors was also a well-known popular writer of the times, Alban Stolz. At the end of one such list of donations we read in March 1877:

"To all kind donors our sincere thanks and we wish them the protection of the powerful patrons of our house in life and in death! ... You are building God's spiritual house and increasing those graced sanctuaries from which a new fullness of blessing is to flow out for the many. -

O holy, self-sacrificing love of the crucified Lord Jesus! May you grow ever more in the hearts of all people! That would take the power away from all evil and the Kingdom of God would blossom forth in a new brilliance on earth. May that be done. Amen."

In February 1877, in the midst of the construction work for the first new building, he launched a very special appeal for Christmas 1877 in the "Little Messenger of the Sacred Heart":

"Since there is still so much lacking either for the internal construction of the house or for the upkeep and increase in the number of our students, we thought that the coming feast of Christmas would offer a fitting opportunity to appeal to the willingness of our esteemed benefactors to support a charitable cause.

The light of Bethlehem has come to illumine the night of paganism with its mild heavenly rays. And how poorly off would we be if it had not shone into our own darkness and if it had not changed pagan Germany into a Christian Germany through the self-sacrificing labors of apostolic men!

"Finally we ask for a Christmas donation for our house and at the same we ask you to recommend the "Little Messenger of the Sacred Heart" among your acquaintances."

In July 1877 the report in the “Little Messenger of the Sacred Heart” about donations received also carries a few words about the progress of the construction of the new building since it was begun in August 1876:

“A heartfelt thank you, God’s richest reward and the protection of our holy patrons for all our noble benefactors! At the same time the continuing needs of the house urge us to recommend the same once again to the religious zeal of our esteemed readers and friends. Hopefully during the month of August it will be possible to move into the new building and to go ahead with the acceptance of new students. May God give us all necessary means for it!”

Not only financial donations were welcome, but in the September issue of the “Little Messenger of the Sacred Heart” we also read:

“...donations of linen and other items, particularly of bedding and towels, as well as of underwear are very welcome.”

THE NEW BUILDING

Completion

Also in the September 1877 issue of the “Little Messenger of the Sacred Heart” we read:

“The interior of the new building which was begun on August 17 last year, almost without any financial means, has now also been almost completed and we hope to be able to solemnly bless it together with the new chapel on Saturday, September 8, the birthday of our Lady. Most probably the house will be honored to accommodate in its rooms on this day a bishop from China, together with a China missionary who was born in the Netherlands and whose name has lately been mentioned frequently. The solemn High Mass begins at 10.30 am, twenty minutes after the arrival of the train from Venlo.”

The first residents: Retreatants

The new building was to serve students. However, in the same issue of the “Little Messenger” we read:

“Before students are accepted, the house is first to be used for retreats.”

The beginning of the retreat apostolate in Steyl

How did it come about that the new building was first used for retreatants?

The Archbishop of Cologne, Paulus Melchers, who because of the cultural war in Prussia lived in exile in the Netherlands, wrote to Fr. Arnold in the summer of 1877 “that for three years his clergy had been unable to make a retreat. He urged the Rector to allow the seminary in Steyl to be used for his priests’ retreats” (Bornemann, *Remembering Arnold Janssen, Analecta SVD* – 42, Rome 1978, p. 89).

In the September 1877 issue of the “Little Messenger of the Sacred Heart” we read:

“This happens because of a frequently expressed wish, since there is no more opportunity for it in Germany [because of the cultural war]. So we will hold

retreats for priests from Monday evening, September 10, to Saturday morning, [September] 15, and from Monday evening, September 17, to Saturday morning, Sept. 22. From Monday evening, [September] 24 to Friday morning [September] 28 we will give retreats in our house for adult and young lay men.”

Why was it so important for Fr. Arnold to open the mission house for the retreat apostolate? In the October issue of the “Little Messenger of the Sacred Heart” he gives this answer:

‘During the retreat people pray; they meditate; the past life is examined; in the light of faith new resolutions are made; in a few days in the melting pot of the Divine Word the old man is ground and crushed in order to rise from it, born anew in God’. How can there be anything more precious and graced than this?

Archbishop Melchers had pointed out to Fr. Arnold an important side effect of the retreat apostolate: The retreats “were also an effective means to create good will for the seminary and provide a little support for the pressing needs” (Bornemann, *Arnold Janssen*, Arnoldus Press Manila, 1975, p. 104).

According to Bornemann the retreat apostolate was important for yet another reason: The retreats “also brought the German seminary on Dutch soil into closer contact with the Church in Germany, where its publications would be read and from where vocations and [financial] support had to come” (*ibid.*).

The retreats went like this: In the first week from September 10 to 14, 41 priests from 7 dioceses made their retreat; “in the second week there were forty-three (fifty six applied but due to the lack of the necessary equipment, that is, bedding, not all could be accepted). During this present third week we are host to twenty-three lay people from the most varied walks of life and places who are devoting themselves in holy silence and earnest zeal to their personal sanctification” (Josef Alt, *Journey in Faith*, p. 167).

A further retreat for priests was held from October 1-5, 1877 in which 26 priests participated. The retreat directors were a Franciscan and a diocesan priest for the priests’ retreats and a Redemptorist Father for the lay peoples’ retreat (*ibid.*, p.168).

During the first retreat for priests, given by the Franciscan Fr. Ignatius Jeiler, “Fr. Arnold zealously took down notes in order to collect material for his own talks and retreats” (*ibid.* p. 167).

With these retreats in the mission house’s first new building, the successful Steyl retreat apostolate began, first for men in St. Michael’s mission house and after the founding of the Mission Congregation of the Servants of the Holy Spirit also for women in the Sisters’ convent.

Blessing of the New Building and Chapel

On September 8, 1877, the parish priest of Tegelen, Fr. Pennigs, blessed the new building.

On September 29, 1877 the chapel was blessed by the Vicar Apostolic of East Hupe in China, Bishop Eustachius Modestus Zanolli OFM. The bishop had arrived in Steyl on September 28. At 7 pm the students had gathered in front of the mission house to welcome the bishop. In the background there was the mission house brightly