

# FATHER ARNOLD'S LEGACY

## 1. Trinitarian foundation of our life

The Blessed Trinity's love for us and our love for the Blessed Trinity

What did Fr. Arnold leave us at the time of his death? Did he leave anything that is worthwhile for us who live in the year 2023, 114 years after his death?

Yes, he did and in the first place I want to mention that he left us the love of the Blessed Trinity as the foundation of his life. He said: *"The Triune God tells us: Before the foundation of the world I have already chosen you and loved you with never ending love."*

Responding to this love of the Trinity, he answered with his own love for the Trinity, by consecrating his life to the Blessed Trinity – and then, yes, by even calling his first foundation the "Society of the Divine Word".

According to the SVD 1891 Constitutions, the significance of "Divine Word" is: The Word of the Father and that is the Son. The Word of the incarnate Son and that is the gospel of Jesus Christ; the Word of the Holy Spirit which is the whole Bible, and the word of the prophets, apostles and priests in so far as they speak inspired by the Holy Spirit.

And so, we can say: Fr. Arnold knew himself loved by the Blessed Trinity and he himself was in love with the Blessed Trinity. This mutual love was the foundation of his life. Therefore, he ended his earthly life with three prayers to the three persons of the Trinity which he wrote six months before he died. In his third prayer to the Holy Spirit he also thought of us, his spiritual sons and daughters as he loved to call us, and he prayed:

*Now when my life ends, when my eyes have closed, let others stand in my place and let my sons, my daughters implore you!*

*Grant them, that they may love you sincerely.*

*Therefore, I consecrate them to your love, oh take them under your protection!*

*Accept them in your goodness and love, You, God's breath of love.*

It is true, in this prayer Fr. Arnold entrusts us to the Holy Spirit. However, remembering Fr. Arnold's understanding of the relationship between the three divine persons we say with him:

"We wish to worship the Holy Spirit not exclusively but in union with the other two holy Persons of the Divine Trinity, the heavenly Father and especially His Son our Redeemer and His most loveable heart."

And so, in his last prayer to the Holy Spirit Fr. Arnold entrusts us to the Blessed Trinity. It is his wish, and therefore I say it is his legacy to us, the members of the Arnoldus Family, that like him we also love and worship the Blessed Trinity and that the Trinity's love for us and our love for the three persons of the Trinity is the foundation of our life as well.

## 2. The unfolding of our life's foundation in the Trinity in mottos

Fr. Arnold left us some mottos which summarize in a short form the mission of his foundations.

### a. May the Heart of Jesus ...

The first motto I want to talk about is: *Vivat Cor Jesu in cordibus hominum* – May the Heart of Jesus live in the hearts of all people.

To understand this motto, we have to remember that on June 16, 1875 Fr. Arnold, the Luxemburg priest Fr. Peter Bill and the Bavarian seminarian John Baptist Anzer consecrated themselves and the mission of the new mission house in Steyl to the Sacred Heart with these or similar words:

*With regard to the fervent wishes of Your Most Sacred Heart, which in such a special way are directed towards the spread of Your holy Kingdom upon earth,*

*I \_\_\_\_\_,*

*Kneeling before You, my creator, redeemer and sustainer,*

*Make my poor person available to Your divine Heart with regard to the mission work of your holy Church, insofar as participation in it is being striven for in this house.*

The consecration concluded with the words:

*May the light of the divine Word shine into the darkness of sin and the night of paganism, and may the Heart of Jesus live in the hearts of people (ibid., p. 37).*

About this consecration Fr. Arnold wrote in the August 1875 issue of his mission magazine "Kleiner Herz Jesu Bote" – Little Messenger of the Sacred Heart:

June 16, 1875 had been the two hundredth anniversary of the apparition of the Sacred Heart of Jesus to Margaret Mary Alacoque and on that day the first members of the mission house had consecrated themselves to the Sacred Heart and the mission of the new mission house and on that day the contract for buying the mission house had been signed. Therefore Fr. Arnold saw June 16, 1875 as the birthday of the Steyl mission work. He wrote:

The mission house will never forget about this its origin. According to its purpose the mission house is directed towards working for the fulfillment of the graceful intentions of the divine Sacred Heart of Jesus. Therefore, this origin admonishes it to express this still more clearly with the explicit mentioning of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. In order to prove that the mission house will work for the fulfillment of the intentions of the Sacred Heart it chooses as its motto the following beautiful words: *Vivat cor Jesu in Cordibus Hominum* – May the Heart of Jesus live in the hearts of all people.

Whenever we say the words of this motto today, we should remember that by doing so we dedicate ourselves to fulfilling the wishes of the Sacred Heart of Jesus: the spread of the kingdom of God.

### b. May the darkness of sin ...

Another famous motto is: May the darkness of sin and the night of unbelief vanish before the light of the word and the spirit of grace.

This motto had an earlier form.

Before 1884 the Veneration of the Divine Word and the Sacred Heart were the main content of Fr. Arnolds and his companions' spirituality. And from around 1884 on we have a second motto for the Society, though naturally not yet mentioning the Spirit as was done from 1885 on. The original version is: *May the sweet light of the Divine Word shine into the darkness of sin and the night of paganism and the Heart of Jesus live in the hearts of all people.* Probably sometime before 1884 Fr. Arnold had written an explanation of this motto in Latin which seems to be helpful to understand our present motto, as well.

Fr. Arnold does not call these words a prayer, but simply, "adagium" in Latin, and that means a proverb or a motto. This proverb or motto can be remembered easily and therefore it is to be frequently repeated. In a short form it teaches us and others the nature of our Society.

Fr. Arnold begins with explaining the words: "*The light of the Divine Word may shine into the night of paganism.*" These words describe the first purpose of our Society: the conversion of the pagans. However, the motto does not conceal our Society's secondary purpose, for it also says: may it shine into the darkness of sin. "Sins are everywhere where people live, and they are also in ourselves. The confreres (and, I add, the Sisters as well) will have to fight against them wherever they may be." In other words: The Society's task and later the task of the Holy Spirit Sisters' congregations covers the whole world – wherever people live.

Then our motto describes the Word as light. "May the ... light of the Divine Word shine..." The preachers of the Divine Word need this light, for without the light of the Divine Word, which enlightens every human being who comes into the world, the preachers of the Divine Word will not be able to do anything.

This light is called "sweet", and with this word we praise the divine goodness and sweetness which as divine charity holds first place. And it is this charity or supreme love which we must preach.

The proverb or motto ends with the words of the first motto being added to it: "may the heart of Jesus live in the hearts of all people."

The heart of Jesus lives in the most perfect way in the hearts of people when people are of one mind and will with the Sacred Heart of Jesus. The Heart of Jesus must also live in our own hearts through genuine piety and through love. It is that love which loves the neighbor whom we see and for him or her it provides what is good for them. And that means concretely: The needy must be given food, the helpless must be supported, the erring taught. ... And this is a love which also goes out to the poor souls in purgatory..."

So far Fr. Arnold's explanation of this motto.

When Fr. Arnold wrote this motto and its explanation, the Congregation of the Holy Spirit Sisters with its two branches had not yet been founded, but their first future members, Helena Stollenwerk, Theresia Sicke and Hendrina Stenmanns, were already in Steyl. Therefore, the Sisters rightly see it as their motto as well. Just add Sisters to it. And, as I will show you shortly, you can do this, for we are very close relatives in Fr. Arnold's mind.

c. May the Holy Triune God live in our hearts

We find this motto for the first time in the September 1885 Constitutions. The Constitutions of 1891 say: As often as we write to each other we shall put at the head

of the letter the Words: May the Holy Triune God live in our hearts. In the Constitutions of the Holy Spirit Sisters of 1891/93 we read literally the same.

Over the years this motto has been changed, even by Fr. Arnold who wrote at least twice: May the Holy Triune God live in the hearts of all people.

The Holy Spirit Sisters say: May the Holy Triune God live in our hearts and in the hearts of all people.

#### d. QUARTER HOUR PRAYER

In addition to these mottos, Fr. Arnold left us the Quarter Hour prayer which in the course of time underwent several changes before reaching our present version.

### 3. The Trinitarian foundation of the life of the Arnoldus Family makes us close relatives.

- a. Our names SVD, SSpS, SSpS AP are the first indication that we are close relatives
- b. We hear Fr. Arnold's understanding of it when in 1900 on the occasion of the Silver Jubilee of St. Michael in Steyl he said:

"On all five continents the Society has achieved remarkable results. The missionaries have an enormous struggle in these places. Ordinarily they find no ready ears for their message and very few people are ready to follow them. Evil is still powerful in these places. ...

The fighters of our Society need the 'Mary' branch, the Cloistered Sisters, so that the priests, Brothers and Sisters will succeed in their work, so that the blessing of God will gush up and soften the alienated hearts through humility, meekness and other virtues and prepare them for Christianity" (Müller, Contemplation and Mission, p. 86).. You notice that Fr. Arnold said that the priests, brothers and Sisters, the missionary Sisters SSpS, need the Mary branch. The SVD and SSpS are the Martha branch. Whereas in the Sisters' first rule of 1891/1893 the mission Sisters were the Martha branch and the Cloistered Sisters the Mary branch, by 1900 the SVD together with the SSpS are Marthas!!! .

#### c. WORD and BREATH/SPIRIT

Our two names, Mission Congregation of the Servants of the Holy Spirit – and Socii Verbi Divini – companions of the Divine Word, Divine Word Missionaries show us that we belong together like breath and word belong together. A word is formed and becomes audible with the breath. In the creation story, Gen 1:1-2 we read that in the beginning there was chaos. And the ruach of God swept over the chaos. Ruach can mean a strong wind, a storm or breath and spirit. Therefore, the German theologian Medard Kehl says:

"The breath of God is already hovering over the chaos and in the act of creation it forms itself into the voice, into the word of God which puts an end to chaos.

In the power of the life giving breath in which the creative word of God sounds over the world and which God breathes into his world, chaos becomes the well ordered creation." (Medard Kehl, Und Gott sah, dass es gut war: Eine Theologie der Schöpfung [And God Saw That It Was Good: A Theology of Creation], Herder, Freiburg 2006, p.120).

#### d. In trinitarian theology: The Two Hands of the Father

Here we are reminded of Irenaeus of Lyon who said that the Word and the Spirit are the two hands of the Father. And the Father carries out his mission through these two hands of his.

In his German book "Kleine Trinitätslehre" (Short doctrine of the Trinity) Leonardo Boff concludes his chapter on the two hands of the Father with the prayer:

"Father, give us your hand and save us from this misery! And the Father, who heard the cry of his oppressed sons and daughters, stretched out his two hands to liberate us and to embrace us lovingly: the Son and the Holy Spirit" (Boff, Kleine Trinitätslehre, p. 36).

The Son and the Holy Spirit are the two hands of the Father. I would like to apply this picture to the originally two, now three congregations, the SVD, CMSSpS and SSpS AP. I dare to say: "The Son, the incarnate Word, and the Holy Spirit are the two hands of the Father and these two hands want to embrace humankind and the whole of creation through us, the SVD, SSpS, SSpSAP and our respective lay partners, and in that way realize the Father's plan of salvation for humankind and the whole of creation." (Leonardo Boff, Der Heilige Geist [The Holy Spirit], Herder, Freiburg, 2014, p. 114)

We find similar thoughts also in the Vatican II Dogmatic Constitution Dei Verbum, no. 2. There we read:

"It pleased God, in his goodness and wisdom, to reveal himself and to make known the mystery of his will (cf. Eph. 1:9). By this was meant that people should have access to the Father, through Christ, the Word made flesh, in the Holy Spirit, and thus become sharers in the divine nature (cf. Eph. 2:18; 2 Pet. 1:4). With this revelation, then, the invisible God (cf. Col. 1:15; 1 Tim. 1:17), from the fullness of his love, addresses men as friends (cf. Ex. 33:11; Jn. 15:14-15), and moves among them (cf. Bar. 3:38), in order to invite and receive them into his own company."

**Through his two hands**, the Word and the Spirit the Father address all human beings as friends and moves among them in order to invite and receive them into his own company.

Applied to us: Through us who, in response to God's call, have committed ourselves to give the two hands of the Father a human form, human hands in the Society of the Divine Word and the two Congregations of the Servants of the Holy Spirit, God wants to address all human beings as friends and through us He wants to invite them into his own Trinitarian life. That is our Trinitarian mission and as such it belongs to the legacy of our Founder.

**And it makes us fit** for our unsettled time right now. There are bigger and smaller wars all over the world- we Europeans have a war next door, the war in the Ukraine which also affects people outside of Europe. What contribution can we as the two hands of the Father make in such a situation? Regarding the war in the Ukraine, our contribution is demanded from us: We are somehow involved in that war, the SSpS more than the SVD. The SSpS has Ukrainian Sisters, we SVD have Polish priests looking after three parishes. We both have sisters, priests, brothers working in Russia.

**What can our contribution be?**

A religious Sister in the Ukraine said: "*We need to learn how to overcome our problems and difficulties with faith and prayer! Come Holy Spirit and fill our land, renew our earth!*"

I am sure, Fr. Arnold would have said the same, for he was convinced that the greater the problems, the more we need prayer to solve them.

During the first World Day of Prayer for Peace in 1986 in Assisi, Pope John Paul II said: "Prayer binds people together. Through prayer we can show our solidarity with the suffering people in the war zones." How?

We can join the silent prayers in the hearts of people suffering psychologically and physically from the cruelty of war- and

We can lift up our hands and join the prayers expressed with words,

- Prayers in the form of cries of pain, prayers in the form of anger at God (the prayer of Job), prayer in the form of tears. Bishop Bohdan Dzyurakh of the Ukrainian Byzantine Rite Catholics said that his priests try “to accompany the people by bringing their tears in prayer before God.”
- prayers begging God for help and protection,
- prayers to help find ways leading to lasting peace
- prayers for being able to forgive the enemy

Let me sum up: Faithful to Fr. Arnold’s Trinitarian legacy, as the human form of the two hands of the Father, we do pray in solidarity with the suffering people who are in war. For through us the Father wants to embrace all of them as his friends and bring them together into his Trinitarian community. What an overwhelming mission that is!!!

#### 4. INTEGRITY OF CREATION – LOVE FOR NATURE

Fr. Arnold’s love for nature, for the whole of creation, is also a part of his legacy to us. ‘Nature is the temple of God,’ he wrote 1878 in the first issue of his family magazine, Stadt Gottes.

No wonder that in one of the talks during the retreat just before the first investiture of the SSpS with Helena Stollenwerk, Hendrina Stenmanns, Michaela Tönnies as participants he asked:

“How can creatures glorify God?” Then He answered: “They speak of him and bear witness to him. Creatures prove that there is a God. It is important for the Sisters to understand this well.

Among creatures we find everything so purposefully arranged – as with animals and plants, purposefully for the whole and for the species.

How much the human eye can find to enjoy! And how wonderfully is everything arranged! What some creatures flee from and detest, others are looking for. Yes, how wonderfully everything has been arranged.

For instance, if you examine a bee with a magnifying glass, you discover, so to speak, a new world.

What does all of this prove? That there must be a powerful, intelligent God who has created it all. Everything serves its particular purpose and has been created accordingly.

The human hand alone is itself a work of art.

Or look at the animals which live in water. Water in itself is already something wonderful.” Fr. Arnold continued, “ For a missionary Sister it is a very special task to show from nature that there is a God. Therefore, it is very good when you collect thoughts from nature for yourselves. Nature proclaims its God, its Creator.”

At the time of Fr. Arnold natural science was used against the belief in God. Fr. Arnold wanted his priests to counteract that by writing good natural science articles. In his personal notes from 1906 he wrote:

“May God the Holy Spirit teach our priests to produce fascinating writings, particularly against the denial of God, showing what a marvellous thing is that power of life which forms such wonderful and at the same time practical and beautiful organs in plants and animals and that with a wonderful constancy.”

#### 5. Fr: Arnold’s legacy according to chapter 1 of the 1905 SVD Constitutions

Chapter 1 of the 1905 Constitutions is of special importance for our topic of Fr. Arnold’s legacy. He himself wrote about this chapter:

“I wrote it from a sense of duty in that I kept in mind the importance that this chapter would have for the Society now and in the future.” Bornemann calls this chapter the “Founder’s mature work on the spirit and the task of our Society.” What he writes for the SVD, applies also for the Sisters and our respective lay partners. Here are some points which illustrate his legacy:

a. Love for the Holy Spirit and the Trinity

“The members should glorify the Holy Spirit, but in him and with him at the same time the Father and the Son, the three Persons of the Holy Trinity.

*“It is always the most Blessed Trinity itself whom we will honor with heart, word and deed: with our heart, by our love and surrender;  
With our word, by our heartfelt prayers and preaching;  
In deeds, through all our activities.”*

b. Missionaries at heart

“Our Lord not only preached but also prayed. We, too, must do the one without neglecting the other, in order to follow Christ and unite ourselves to him.

[We] all must first be missionaries at heart, that is by ... zeal and prayer.”

c. Various missionary activities

“Since the propagation of the faith is an extremely difficult task, in addition to proclaiming it and praying for it, we must use other means that prudence suggests and that are suitable to us as missionaries of the Catholic Church, such as schools and institutes, retreats, the publication of good literature, the running of parishes, when necessary, the cultivation of sciences and literature. These must not be neglected, ... If, then, one of our men is considered qualified for advanced scientific studies, let no one think that his training will distract us from our purpose.”

d. Loyalty to the Church

Fr. Arnold did not agree with everything the church authorities in Rome told him to do. He criticized them sharply. But he also said to us SVD and he would have said it to the Sisters as well:

“We must at all times be loyal sons – loyal daughters - of the Catholic Church and completely submit to the pope and to the bishops.” That seems to be very difficult today!

e. Works of mercy

And finally an important word for our work as the two hands of the Father:

“The spiritual and corporal works of mercy will receive our special attention, since the Lord has especially recommended them to us. People are images of God, brothers and sisters of Christ, and temples of the Holy Spirit. Just as God cares for them out of the fullness of his love, endures their defects, and seeks to reform them, so we, too, will love them actively. This will be our golden rule, whether we spread the faith or foster fraternal love.

In practicing these works of charity we will not forget our deceased, especially those who are recommended to our prayers.”

6. A very open understanding of mission

If you asked what was Fr. Arnold’s understanding of mission you would have to say: he did not have a static one, but the needs of people/ the needs of the church and of

the world influenced his understanding of mission. He did his best to recognise the signs of the times: At the beginning in Steyl he saw first of all, but not exclusively, the need to proclaim the gospel to people who had never heard of it – particularly the people in China. He was overwhelmed by the huge population of China. Not long after, the request came to him to send his missionaries to Latin America and work for the good of the German migrants to Latin America who were in danger of losing their faith. All these people were living outside of Germany and Europe. But also, very soon, two years after the founding of the Steyl mission house, he responded to the needs of people in Germany, Netherlands, Belgium, Austria. When asked by the archbishop of Cologne to open his house for priest retreats – he immediately said “yes” and added: “and for lay people as well.” From 1877 until his death in 1909 more than 6,000 men and women had made their retreat in Steyl – the men in St. Michael, the women in the Mission Sisters’ convent.

When asked by a Dutch publisher to consider the publication of an illustrated German family magazine, after some initial hesitation he said yes, and his reasons were: “Whoever wants to spread something good he / she must intend to influence his fellow human beings and then must use those means which according to the situation at a given time seem to be the most appropriate ones. The press is today one of those means.”

#### **And today?**

In publishing the “Stadt Gottes” and later the St. Michael’s Almanac, Fr. Arnold, had this goal:

“That the views of our faith would rule more and more in the state, in the family and in the life of the individual person.”

Perhaps we see best the development of Fr. Arnold’s mission understanding in the laying of the foundation stone for St. Gabriel major seminary in Austria:

The Founder had composed the invocations which he recited while striking the foundation stone with a hammer.

These words certainly give us a good insight into how broad his understanding of mission was:

“ For the greater honor and glory of the Holy Spirit, God of eternal love! [Three blows]. – For the welfare of our holy mother the Catholic Church and the spread of her salvation and blessings on all peoples who do not yet know her! (Ditto). – **For the spiritual welfare of this neighbourhood and this Empire beloved by God!** (Ditto) Under the patronage of St. Michael the Archangel and all the holy patrons of the Divine Word!” (Alt, Journey in Faith, p. 407).

In the context of work in nominally Catholic Europe or Latin America or in other nominally Catholic countries the following statements of Fr. Arnold are important:

“May, therefore, no one despise work in Catholic countries, particularly in those in which the faith of the people has declined. Here we are dealing with baptised Christians who therefore have a certain preference over others, even though the pagans because of our Constitutions have the first claim to our help.”

“From a people to whom the gospel has not yet been preached the Lord God demands only the observation of the natural moral law. If, however, the gospel has been preached to a people, it will become more culpable once it falls back into paganism.”

***What kind of legacy has Fr. Arnold left us with this way of understanding mission? Perhaps Pope Leo XIII through the Prefect of the Propagation of faith,***



**Cardinal Ledochowski, formulated it best. In July 1893 Fr Arnold had visited the Pope and given him a report about the Society.** The Cardinal wrote:

“The Holy Father, in the audience of the ninth of this month, graciously accepted the written report, handed in by you, about the missions, colleges and other works of the Society.... From the same he **notices how through your efforts not only the light of the faith is spread amongst the pagan peoples, but also how piety is being promoted amongst the Christian believers. So you are achieving something that is most commendable: being concerned about the spread of the true faith amongst the people living far away, you don't omit to cultivate this part of the vineyard through all your works....**”

When these words were written to Fr. Arnold on behalf of the Pope, Europe was sending missionaries into the world, and the non-Christian world – ASIA, AFRICA received the missionaries. Now it is just the other way around: The former mission countries ASPAC and AFRAM are now the sending countries, and Europe, the USA, Australia are on the receiving end.

The papal praise Fr. Arnold got for his work in Germany, Austria, Netherlands, this same papal praise is now due to our ASPAC and AFRAM confreres and the Sisters for all their ministry in their own home countries and in the neo pagan areas of Europe, Australia, the Americas!

This remark fits to the result of a recent study of Georgetown university in Washington which said that nowadays Catholicism expresses itself more strongly in the developing countries while in the developed nations it has dwindled.

## **CONCLUSION**

As we began, I asked “What did Fr. Arnold leave us at the time of his death? Did he leave anything that is worthwhile for us who live in the year 2023, 114 years after his death?”

In summary I want to say:

Fr. Arnold left us as his legacy first of all his love for the Trinity;

As our names he left us the names of two persons of the trinity, Word/Son and Spirit, the two hands of the Father. And so we now can say: as the two hands of the Father we are sent to let the Father embrace as his friends the whole of humanity and the whole of creation through us .

Furthermore. he left us a very open understanding of mission- open to the ways the Spirit leads us in a particular period of time.

Finally, I want to conclude with words which the late Fr. Josef Alt wrote in the epilogue of his biography of Arnold Janssen, Journey In Faith: Fr. Alt wrote:

“The question to ask in each contemporary reality is not “What would the Founder do today?” but “What ought he to do today?” In this way freedom of action is achieved without denying the obligation to act in the spirit of the Founder. His principle of action points in this direction.” For Fr. Arnold used to say: “I only draw conclusions from things and circumstances. It is God himself who makes the things and circumstances.” (Jos. Alt, Journey In Faith, p. 1010).