

finished their high school studies by then and Averdonk had also studied some philosophy. He left Steyl early in 1877. Averdonk and Müller did not only have lectures in philosophy but at the same time also in theology. In autumn of 1878 Müller got four fellow students; they were the first graduates of the Latin school to have passed their final exam (Bornemann, *Arnold Janssen*, Manila, 1975, p. 108.109).

## A BAVARIAN STUDENT IN STEYL

A very interesting insight into a student's life during the first years of St. Michael's Mission House is given us by Fr. John Weig, later missionary in China and founder of the Steyl Mission in Japan. His uncle, John Baptist Anzer, had brought him to Steyl when he was 11 years old. He was a Bavarian among Northern Germans. *"It was a new, strange world for me. Would I have settled down in this new strange world if Uncle Anzer had not been there? When I got up the first morning and looked out through the window, I saw no woods, no mountains, only monotonous flat land all around. I was gripped by a feeling of inexpressible homesickness. ... And then the food! My mother never cooked like that! The soup was sweet, for my plate disgustingly sweet. Potatoes were mashed and mixed with cooked apples. Little worms swam around in the thick pea soup. We had butter on the bread every day, but I never saw milk, rice, or millet. The beer was sour – but the students seemed to like it! There were thin black slices on the plate; I did not know what they were. Were they slices of meat? I took a morsel. No, that was not meat, it tasted like bread. Did the 'Prussians' not even know how to bake bread? ... For a long time the thick, slate-gray stone plates with the blue edges and the blue cross on the bottom were objects of disgust, even if they were made according to the design and wishes of the Founder. ...*

*I understood little when the others spoke. When I opened my mouth they began to laugh. It was the strong Bavarian 'a' – sounds that caused this. When they did not understand me, the other students asked, What did you say? When I said 'wos' instead of 'was,' they would respond with peals of laughter....*

*Our playground was in the barren Steyl sand dunes. ... During the shorter breaks, we played in the space between the house and the Maas. This part was not cut off from the river by a wall, only partly by a low hedge." When the river flooded, "we sailed around" this part "in little tubs" ... (see *ibid.*, pp. 142-144).*

## A GOOD SPIRIT

St. Michael's mission house faced many problems in its first years. Overall, however, a good spirit reigned in the mission house for which Fr. Arnold was most grateful. In his letter of 9.4.1878 to Archbishop Melchers of Cologne he wrote: *"Furthermore, the spirit amongst the priests and students must oblige us to extraordinary gratitude towards the giver of all that is good, who in spite of the extraordinary difficulties has blessed this project so visibly."*



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## The Arnoldus Family Story

### THE SECOND NEW BUILDING

In February 1878 Fr. Arnold had informed the readers of the *"Kleiner Herz-Jesu-Bote"* (Little Messenger of the Sacred Heart) that a second new building was planned. On April 28, 1878 he wrote to his former co-worker Fr. Peter Bill that on March 7, 1878 work had started on the three storey new building.

### HOW TO PAY THE BILLS

The first new building was just a few months old when the second one was started. In a letter of April 9, 1878 to Archbishop Melchers of Cologne, Fr. Arnold mentioned all the residents of the mission house: *"40 students, 7 teachers..., 6 Sisters of Divine Providence and 12 workers who mainly work free of charge"* (Franz Bosold, Sebastian Matapallil, Letters of Arnold Janssen, CD, SVD Generalate Archives, Letter no. 1878-04-09a). How was Fr. Arnold able to pay all the bills?

In the same letter to Archbishop Melchers he writes: *"Even though we have very little income from the students, we always find, almost without effort on our part, everything necessary for life as well as for the very important buildings which we begin, even without financial means, as soon as the need has become apparent. We hope for everything we need from St. Joseph and until now we have been able to pay all the bills."*

### BOOKKEEPING – FIRST PROCURATOR

The mission house did in fact receive funds from different sources, such as donations, payment for the magazines *"Little Messenger of the Sacred Heart"* and *"Die Heilige Stadt Gottes"* (The Holy City of God) and school fees. Who administered all that incoming money? *"In the first two and half years Rector Janssen had the money in his room and he did the bookkeeping for it"* (Bornemann, *Einige der ersten Bewohner des Missionshauses* (Some of the first residents of the Mission House), *Verbum* 4, 1962, p. 391). That changed with the employment of the first procurator, a trained bookkeeper, Mr Emerich Hermes. He arrived in Steyl on February 8, 1878. Fr. Nicholas Blum, who from 1883 on was the longest serving procurator, wrote later: *"Hermes was my predecessor in the procurator's office."* Fr. Bornemann comments on that statement: *"Since before Hermes there had not been a procurator, but only a versatile Rector, Hermes is the first of all Steyl procurators..."* (*ibid.*, p. 394).

The tasks of the procurator included the keeping of the cash book, writing of addresses and bills for the mailing of the magazines and sending out reminders for outstanding payments. The “Little Messenger of the Sacred Heart” at the end of 1877 had a circulation of 12 000 (10 000 subscribers); the “*Die Heilige Stadt Gottes*” (Holy City of God) which had been published since January 1878 had a circulation of 3 000 (*ibid.*, p. 395).

Mr. Hermes had a good helper in the student Nicholas Blum, who spent all his free time in the shipping room. In his diary he writes about himself: “*When my co-students were free, on vacation, or on excursions, Blum sat in the shipping room writing addresses and bills. I thought that was the way things had to be; I did not envy the others nor think I was doing anything special. At that time I was convinced that every moment had to be spent for the good cause*” (in Josef Alt, transl. Frank Mansfield, Jacqueline Mulberge, *Journey in Faith*, Steyler Verlag Nettetal, 2002, p. 155). Summarizing the story of Hermes, Bornemann writes: “*Hermes certainly was not just any employee of the house; inside and outside the house he had a specially good reputation. ... The way he managed his office must have been good, even excellent. ‘He was a clever man’, Fr. Blum said. That is high praise because it was made without any reservation and there was no reprimand made, even though in other cases Fr. Blum points out clearly the limitations of his co-workers.*”

Within the history of the Steyl procure his achievements are also remarkable. ‘*He laid the foundation for bookkeeping and the collection of documents*’, that is the collection of buying and sale contracts, documents about donations, study stipends, Mass stipends, annual rent contracts etc.” (*ibid.*, p. 397). The procurator got an annual salary of 300 German Marks; board and lodging were free (*see ibid.*).

## CANDIDATES FOR ORDINATION

The reason for the above-mentioned letter of Fr. Arnold to the Archbishop of Cologne was a happy development in the mission house. “*In our mission house there are three students who by birth belong to your archdiocese. The first of them I want to present to the Most Reverend Bishop of Roermond for sacred ordinations on Pentecost of this year, the other two probably next winter.*” Because of that he needed letters from the archbishop stating their release from the archdiocese as well as letters of recommendation for these candidates, for which he now begged “*most respectfully*” and “*most urgently*”, “*since the students deserve full recommendation and they have already been in our house for several years.*”

## PLANS FOR SENDING OUT THE FIRST MISSIONARIES

The mission house had been founded to train missionaries for the foreign missions. By 1878 the first students were preparing themselves for sacred ordination. When would the first missionaries be sent out into the world and where to?

To the Archbishop of Cologne Fr. Arnold wrote in the same letter of April 9, 1878 that two priests of the house, “*a Mr. Anzer from Bavaria and a brother of mine [John Janssen]*” wished “*to be allowed to go to China next autumn and I hope to make that possible by then.*” At that time Josef Freinademetz had not yet come to Steyl so his

name was not mentioned. In order to make it possible for them to go to China Fr. Arnold had already asked the Vicar Apostolic of Hong Kong, Raimondi, for his support of the Steyl mission plans in Rome. On April 26, 1878, Bishop Raimondi wrote to Cardinal Simeoni, the Prefect of the Propaganda that “*when he was in Europe 1873-1874 he met Fr. Janssen and encouraged him to open a mission seminary for German-speaking alumni. He had heard that it was successful and the college was flourishing*” (Josef Alt, *Journey in Faith*, p. 170, footnote 4). “*One area which he thought might be considered was ‘Kansu, which the Belgian missionaries (of Scheut) had refused.’* He himself would be glad to welcome the priests from Steyl as his guests and help them set up a procure in Hong Kong. In due course they would travel from there to the territory assigned to them” (Bornemann, *Arnold Janssen, Founder of Three Missionary Congregations*, transl. John Vogelgesang, Arnoldus Press Manila, 1975, p.121).

## CLASSES IN THE SCHOOLS

St. Michael’s mission house was home to a High School, called Latin School and a school of philosophy/theology. The teachers were mainly the priests belonging to the mission house: Arnold Janssen, John Baptist Anzer, Hermann Wegener, and John Janssen. Only Fr. Arnold was a trained teacher. Besides them, from 1877 on, priests who could not get employment in Germany because of the Kulturkampf (cultural battle) were employed as teachers.

Those who had not yet finished High School when they entered the mission house, first had to become students of the High School. This school was gradually built up. In the fall of 1878 at the beginning of classes there were “*seven teachers and 48 students, divided into the full six grades of the complete course. Each of the four lower levels required one semester to complete, while the upper two required a year each.*” Students could manage to complete all six grades in four years. “*That arrangement remained in force for the next several decades*” (*ibid.*, p. 106).

What were classes like in the Latin School?

Fr. Nicholas Blum who entered Steyl in 1876 and had first been a high school student recalls: “*What did we learn? We studied Latin grammar and some authors: Nepos, Caesar, Virgil, Ovid, Cicero, and Horace. We could understand Latin. We got to know some Greek grammar and made an attempt to understand Xenophon and Homer. French: we read some of the exercises and works of Ploetz. Religion: we knew Wilmer’s handbook well. History and geography from textbooks. Mathematics and geometry according to Heis and Boymer. We also picked up some botany, zoology, chemistry and physics. So those were the subjects we had. It is a pity the time was so short. Of course we also had German composition, the classics, etc.*” (Josef Alt, *Journey in Faith*, p. 141).

Besides the High School there was also the school of philosophy/theology. The first students of theology were Francis Xavier Reichart who had left Steyl in 1876 and John Baptist Anzer who was ordained priest in August 1876. The first students of philosophy were the Dutchman Herman Averdonk and the German Henry Müller who had entered Steyl in September and October 1876 respectively. Both had already