

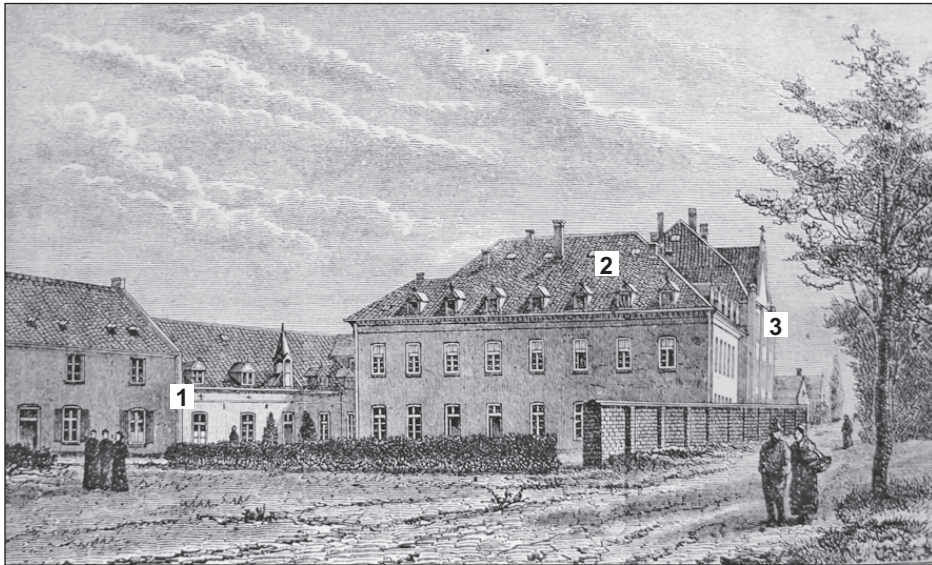
SECOND NEW BUILDING

In August 1878 the readers of the “Kleiner Herz-Jesu-Bote” (Little Messenger of the Sacred Heart) were given the following information:

“When this issue is in the hands of the readers, the main building of the mission house, which was started at the beginning of the year [March] will - if God so wishes - be pretty much completed. Thanks be to the good God who gave his all-powerful blessing to the project, thanks be to the holy foster father Joseph and all the dear saints who were close to us with their protection, thanks be also and God’s richest reward to the noble benefactors who through their alms donated a small stone to the building. It is true, much has still to be paid for and much has yet to be done; however we firmly trust in God’s further blessing and the protection of our dear patrons. At the same time we also hope that our benefactors will not withdraw their kind help from us.”

On August 22nd 1878 this new building was solemnly blessed by the friend of the house and former China missionary, Fr. Smorenburg.

St. Michael’s Missionhouse, Steyl, in August 1878



- 1 - old inn bought by Fr. Arnold
- 2 - first new building
- 3 - second new building



Divine Word Missionaries
Secretariat Arnold Janssen Steyl

VOLUME 9 | NO. 2 | FEBRUARY 2015

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The Arnoldus Family Story

In the January issue of the ARNOLDUS FAMILY STORY we accompanied Fr. Arnold Janssen in Rome. A few hours after his private audience with Pope Leo XIII on July 12, 1878, he left Rome. First he travelled to Loreto, where in the morning of July 13 – in his own words – he celebrated Holy Mass “in the house in which the Eternal Word became flesh”. In the afternoon he continued his journey by train first to Verona (Italy) where he visited the African College of Bishop Daniel Comboni. The rector of the college who had visited Steyl together with Bishop Comboni at the end of 1877, “clapped his hands in delight when he saw me, so impressed was he by the visit he had made to Steyl” (Alt, *Journey in Faith*, p. 175). From Verona Fr. Arnold went on to Brixen where he wanted to meet for the first time with Fr. Joseph Freinandemetz whom he had asked in a letter to come to Brixen. Yet Fr. Joseph was not the only one Fr. Arnold wanted to meet in Brixen.

FR. ARNOLD IN BRIXEN

Visits with benefactors and friends

In Brixen Fr. Arnold stayed with the Capuchins. He visited the Augustinian Canon Regular John Chrysostomus Mitterrutzner, who had been a teacher of Fr. Joseph Freinandemetz and who was the driving force behind the mission enthusiasm in the diocese of Brixen. Furthermore Fr. Arnold visited Fr. Schmiederer, the director of the minor seminary who had begun to send financial donations to the mission house in Steyl. In the major seminary he visited the circle of friends of St. Michael’s mission house in Steyl which had existed there since the end of 1875 / beginning of 1876. The driving force behind this circle of friends was the seminarian Aemilian Schoepfer. He had been selling Fr. Arnold’s mission magazine “Kleiner Herz-Jesu-Bote” – Little Messenger of the Sacred Heart – amongst the clergy of the diocese of Brixen and even in the remotest Alpine villages of South Tyrol. He even thought of joining the mission house in Steyl, but his superiors in Brixen had other plans for him. Another member of the circle of friends was Joseph Seeber who published poems in the newly founded Steyl weekly magazine “Die Heilige Stadt Gottes” – “The Holy City of God”. Schoepfer received a lot of criticism for his campaign for the mission house in Steyl. The diocese had just built a new minor seminary which cost a lot of money. Campaigning for Steyl and the pagan missions was against the interests of the diocese, some people said. Schoepfer’s reply was: “Pagan missions must become the concern of all the people.”

Two Future Saints meet

It was Monday, July 15 or Tuesday, July 16 that Frs. Arnold and Joseph met in the Capuchin monastery in Brixen. However, Fr. Joseph felt disappointed and depressed after the meeting. The second SVD bishop and successor of Bishop Anzer, Bishop August Henninghaus who knew both Frs. Arnold and Joseph well described the meeting in this way:

Freinademetz was a warm hearted South Tyrolean with a lively sensitivity. He was used to the pleasant, warm disposition of his people. In his breast the fire of enthusiasm for the missions was burning and he felt mightily urged to be able to go to the missions as soon as possible. His opposite number was the cool, taciturn Northern German. The blessed founder, particularly in the first years, could be very cool and reserved towards those who applied to enter the mission house. The reason for that may have been partly his character and the strict self discipline which he had always practiced. But he may have been guided partly by the intention to dampen the perhaps too natural enthusiasm right from the beginning, to put the vocation clearly on its supernatural foundation and to test its sincerity through the practice of self-denial. With this outwardly cool reserve he seems to have met the young Tyrolean priest (August Henninghaus, P. Josef Freinademetz S.V.D., Sein Leben und Wirken [His life and work], Zugleich Beiträge zur Geschichte der Mission Süd-Shantung [At the same time contributions towards the history of the South Shantung Mission], Yenchowfu, Verlag der katholischen Mission [publisher Catholic Mission], 1920, p. 16).

When Fr. Freinademetz met Fr. Arnold, his bishop had already given him the written permanent release from the diocese on July 4th 1878 so that he could work as a missionary (Bornemann, *As Wine Poured Out, Blessed Joseph Freinademetz*, Divine Word Missionaries, Rome 1984, p. 32). In spite of his disappointing meeting with Fr. Arnold, he was resolved to join the mission house in Steyl. Together with Fr. Arnold he went to see Prince Bishop Gasser of Brixen who told Fr. Arnold: "The bishop of Brixen says NO, but the Catholic bishop says YES; take my son Freinademetz and make a first class missionary out of him" (*ibid.*, p. 33).

RETURN TO STEYL

From Brixen Fr. Arnold travelled back to Steyl, making a number of stops on the way in order to meet people who were important for him and his mission work. The day of his arrival in Steyl is not known; it may have been during the first days of August 1878.

LETTER FROM ROME

Upon his arrival in Steyl he probably found the letter of Cardinal Simeoni, prefect of the Propaganda in Rome, written in July. It was the answer to Fr. Arnold's official report to Pope Leo XIII about St. Michael's mission house in Steyl. The Cardinal wrote:

"Reverend Father!

From the report which you gave to our most holy Lord Leo XIII during your stay in Rome, I see that in the year 1875 a mission house for foreign missions in honour of St. Michael was founded by you in Steyl, diocese of Roermond in Holland, for the purpose of spreading the Catholic faith amongst the pagans, particularly in China. I also

see that the same, according to your report, has already borne rich fruit. Since I cannot doubt that you have set yourself the best goal in the enterprise and carrying out of this work, I wish you good fortune in everything that you have wanted to do until now for the greater honour of God and the salvation of souls; at the same time I exhort you, that while you observe precisely everything that in such cases has to be observed according to the Church's statutes, you continue the work you have begun with a joyful spirit without fear of the difficulties which you perhaps may have to overcome.

It is, however, of greatest importance, as you will understand, that the students of this institution be suitably trained in piety and that they will zealously make the best principles of the sciences their own; in particular that from their young years they become accustomed to carrying the yoke and to giving reverence and obedience to their superiors in every possible way, particularly to the Apostolic See. If all this comes from a genuine spirit they will be able to render useful help in taking care of the apostolic missions. This is, however, as I know, the goal which you have set for yourself and which I hope you will achieve with God's help. In the meantime I will not neglect in my prayers to recommend the institution to the heavenly patrons of this house and I pray greatly that God will give you grace and effective help in special measure. For the time being I ask God that he will kindly preserve you still for a long time to come.

Given at Rome, at our residence of the holy Congregation of the Propagation of the Faith, in July 1878.

Fr. Arnold published this letter in the October 1878 issue of his mission magazine "Kleiner Herz-Jesu-Bote" (Little Messenger of the Sacred Heart) and added the following words:

"From the above words we clearly see how welcome the founding of a German mission seminary has been to the holy Congregation of the Propaganda and how much it wishes the house to progress well.

Let us, therefore, give thanks to God Almighty, that he has already helped us so far and let us not cease to recommend to him in our prayers those through whose donations the mission house has achieved such a development, that it would be a lack of trust in God's providence if we were anxiously worried about the future. May the Lord God reward them for their donations and may he confirm with his most high blessing that Apostolic blessing which upon the request of the Rector the Holy Father Leo XIII has given them!"

WARNING!!!

In the August 1878 issue of the "Kleiner Herz-Jesu-Bote" (Little Messenger of the Sacred Heart) we read the following notice under the heading "Warning":

"Herewith we wish to warn our esteemed friends and benefactors that some time ago, somewhere around Krefeld [a town in Germany] a swindler went around claiming to be a book-keeper of the mission house. In several places he also collected money. If those cases are repeated we ask you to report this to the police."