

WITH ARNOLD JANSSEN IN THE SERVICE OF MISSION –
Development: Fr. Arnold's LAY MISSION PARTNERS TO SVD LAY PARTNERS

INTRODUCTION

Fr. Arnold did not found a Lay Mission Partner organization. However, thanks to his membership in the Apostleship of Prayer, for him there was no question that lay people had their God-given place in the missionary activities of the church. So let us first see how the Apostleship involved the laity in mission.

A. THE APOSTLESHIP OF PRAYER AND THE MISSION OF THE LAITY

1. General remarks

The Apostleship of Prayer was founded in France by Jesuits. Its full name was:

THE APOSTLESHIP OF PRAYER – A HOLY LEAGUE OF CHRISTIAN HEARTS UNITED WITH THE HEART OF JESUS TO OBTAIN THE TRIUMPH OF THE CHURCH AND THE SALVATION OF SOULS.

I will be quoting frequently from a book with the same title, written by Fr. H. Ramiere SJ, the second Director General of this apostleship.

We are now interested in what the Apostleship teaches us about the mission of the laity.

2. The Apostleship of Prayer and the mission of the laity

A key scripture verse of the Apostleship is 1Tim 2: 1-6:

First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgiving be made for everyone, for kings and all who are in high positions, so that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and dignity. This is right and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires everyone to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God; there is also one mediator between God and humankind, Christ Jesus, himself human, who gave himself a ransom for all.

God wants the salvation of all human beings. Therefore he sent his son Jesus Christ into our world and Jesus sent his apostles all over the world. Those who are already Christians share in this apostolic mission. Their vocation is to be auxiliaries, fellow helpers of God in the mission of saving the people of the world. God wants to save people through people, as the Apostleship says. Therefore, to be a Christian and to be a missionary belong together.

How can people be missionaries or God's co-workers? The Apostleship's short answer is: through prayer in communion with others. This prayer is all powerful.

Why is this communitarian prayer all-powerful?

Jesus says:

Again, truly I tell you, if two of you agree on earth about anything you ask, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven (Mt 18: 19). "The reason that this type of prayer is so effective, is that, as Jesus says, wherever two hearts unite in prayer, there is a third heart which prays with them and whose prayer will definitely be heard by the Father, and this third heart is His heart, the heart of Jesus himself. For, so Jesus says, where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them (Mt 18: 20)."

Therefore, when we pray in communion with others, we also pray in union with Jesus and so our prayer for the salvation of people is very effective!

3. The Spirituality of God's missionary co-workers

What is the spirituality of God's missionary co-workers? We find the answer in another key verse of the Apostleship, Philippians 2:5: *Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus.* The life of Jesus was a truly apostolic life. To live an apostolic life meant for Jesus to work for the honor of God and the salvation of people. He always prayed, worked and suffered for both of them.

“If we want to follow Jesus perfectly, we have only one means to do that: like him we must desire the salvation of all peoples and for that intention we must pray, work and suffer.”

Or we also can say, and this was the principle according to which Fr. Arnold lived all his life: as intimately as possible, we must unite our intentions with those of Jesus and in union with him we must offer up all our work for the honor of God and the salvation of people.

To work for the honor of God and the salvation of people means concretely, in the words of the Apostleship of Prayer:

“to build up the kingdom of God, to sanctify souls, to lead the unbelievers to the knowledge of the truth and the sinners to the life of grace, to unite all the children of God who at this hour are split into thousands of opposing sects and hostile groupings.”

And now I must add a third basic thought of the Apostleship of Prayer: “Out of friendship with Jesus we must work for the honor of God and the salvation of people just as He told his disciples and now tells us: *I call you friends, not servants*”.

So far, the Apostleship of Prayer. Now let us see how Fr. Arnold looked for partners in his God-given mission.

B. Fr. ARNOLD'S MISSION PARTNERS IN THE SERVICE OF WORLD MISSION

Introduction

By the end of the 1873 school year his work for the Apostleship of Prayer made clear to Fr. Arnold that he had to work full time for the mission. So he gave up full time teaching and became chaplain of the Ursuline nuns in Kempen and auxiliary teacher in their girls' high school, so as to be able to devote more time to the mission work.

1. Fr. Arnold's first missionary task

Fr. Arnold's first missionary task in Kempen in the service of world mission was to publish a monthly mission: *Kleiner Herz Jesu Bote* – “*Little Messenger of the Sacred Heart* (January 1874). With this mission magazine he wanted to inspire Catholics in German speaking Europe with a world-mission missionary spirit. He hoped that the readers would share his enthusiasm, becoming partners in spreading news about the missions and by subscribing to the magazine, so that, reading the inspiring articles, they too would be transformed into apostles of the Word.

2. Characteristics of Fr. Arnold's world – Mission Partners according to the *Little Messenger of the Sacred Heart*

Fr. Arnold's partners in world mission would have special characteristics. I will mention just two:

a. Emotional bonds between the mission partners and the people in the so-called mission countries

In the Little Messenger of the Sacred Heart Fr. Arnold published many articles about the mission countries and in the first two issues he added maps of those countries or regions. Some of his readers did not like the maps. However, Fr. Arnold defended the use of maps. He wrote: *By the way, it is our urgent wish that as many people as possible study the map and that our readers help each other in studying it. Any effort which one applies to that study is truly worthwhile. Although it may be difficult to read the first map, you will find that the second map is easier and with the third one still better. Finally, when a large map is presented, you will be happy to find yourself so well informed about the mission countries. This is the only way to get a true idea of where the kingdom of God is situated upon earth. Thus, later on you will read the mission reports with much greater joy, for by then you will know those mission countries as well as your own house* (February 1874, p. 17).

With the articles and maps Fr. Arnold endeavored to establish an emotional bond between the reader/ mission partner in Germany / Austria and the non-Christian countries and their peoples. People in Europe were not only to pray and sacrifice for the far away foreign missions, but they would get to know and appreciate the people, their countries and their cultures. That is the first characteristic of Fr. Arnold's partners in the service of world mission.

b. Mission partners are missionary praying men and women

Being filled with the thoughts of the Apostleship of Prayer Fr. Arnold wanted his mission partners to become praying missionary partners – the emphasis being on the word “missionary”.

It seemed to him that the LIVING ROSARY was most suitable for such missionary prayer. People should pray the rosary for the intentions of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. The Living Rosary publication consisted of 15 folders of four pages each. These pages contained the mysteries of the rosary and other information and they were distributed among 15 men or women.

Fr. Arnold noted that since Jesus wants the salvation of everyone, so the rosary is prayed for all the people of the world. Each mystery is prayed for people in a different country.

The reader who prayed the first mystery prayed for the Jews (7 million) and Moslems (150-200 million).

Praying the second mystery, one prayed for China which in 1852 had a population of 537 million people.

With the third mystery people prayed for the indigenous people of Africa – over 100 million

Fourth mystery: for the protestants in central Europe: Germany, Austria/Hungary, Switzerland, Belgium, Luxemburg, Netherlands, Denmark – 34 million

Fifth mystery: for East India – about 237 million people, amongst them almost 2 million Catholics

Sixth mystery: for the people of Spain, France, Portugal, 59 million among them 1,5 million Protestants – all the others are Catholics; the other mysteries prayed again for China; further for Poland, Russia, for America, for Italy, for England, Scotland and Ireland (39 million), for the islands of the South Pacific, including Japan, Philippines, Australia, New Guinea, Fiji etc , (74 million) and finally for the Catholics in Central Europe (51 million).

The pages in the folders contained additional information, such as the connection of the saints of the particular month to the mysteries of the rosary or the situation of people in a certain country.

Since the Living Rosary is a prayer which embraces the whole world, it is really a prayer for mission partners in the service of world mission. With this kind of prayer Fr. Arnold wanted to widen the view people had of the world and its peoples. Mission partners in the service of the world mission need to have a world wide vision.

C. FR. ARNOLD'S MISSION PARTNERS DURING THE TIME OF THE FOUNDING OF THE MISSION HOUSE IN STEYL

Fr. Arnold knew that God wanted him to do more than inspire people in German speaking Europe with a world mission spirit through his mission magazine. In September 1874 he had realized that God was calling him to establish a mission house for German missionaries who would serve in the foreign missions. And now he looked for partners to help him follow this call to found a mission house.

1. Partners through prayer and financial donations

In this month of September 1874 he published the following article in his mission magazine: *Establishment of a German Seminary for the foreign missions*. The first thing he asked his readers or mission partners to do was to pray for a successful foundation. And then he also asked them for financial contributions. On September 29 he travelled for the first time to Venlo in the Netherlands, just over the border from Germany, in search of a property for the future mission house. In November 1874 he wrote another article: *A short word to pious lovers of Jesus (Concerning the establishment of a German mission house)*. In the article he spoke about the necessity of a mission house for German missionaries, and he said that he was looking at a property in a safe place which he could buy. And then he continued: *But with what shall we buy and furnish it? We easily need thousands of Thalers [the currency then]. Pious benefactors must come forward.*

It is interesting how Fr. Arnold motivated his readers to donate money: *Those who give here will give doubly and threefold. The donor will also become founder [or one of the founders] of a most beneficiary enterprise; the donor will become a spiritual father or spiritual mother of all those thousands of people who will find salvation through this foundation.*

In conclusion he wrote: *To be pious means to pray piously, but it also means to work piously with the given talents and to piously offer in so far as one's [life] situation allows it.*

This was the way Fr. Arnold sought to motivate people to become his partners in founding the mission house – by praying for a successful foundation and through financial donations.

But what kind of a house should the mission house be? His partners would certainly have wanted to know about the kind of a house for which they were praying and offering. They expected information. And Fr. Arnold did give them details about the planning.

2. Information for the missionary founding partners

Fr. Arnold had been a high school teacher. And so he consulted with Bishop Raimondi, an Italian missionary who worked in Hong Kong, China. The Bishop advised him to start with an

Apostolic School a school which would train future missionaries from the first year of high school through philosophy and theology until ordination.

Fr. Arnold was sure that his mission partners were not familiar with such schools and so from February 1875 onwards he published several articles in the *Little Messenger* explaining this type of school. One important aspect was that the school would also accept poor students.

3. Renewed motivation to support the foundation of the mission house

Fr. Arnold kept on motivating his mission partners to give financial donations. This time he did so by expressing his great conviction that the foundation would definitely succeed. Donations would not be lost. Why not? He wrote: *In the face of all the difficulties which still will stand in the way of the foundation, we firmly trust in Divine Providence. Indeed, it is our definite opinion that our dear Lord wants this foundation and that it will therefore succeed in spite of all difficulties. It is true, the question of money is very important and we once again have to ask for donations. At the same time we point out the great merits those gain who through their financial donation will become founders of the mission house. God wants the foundation – and no difficulties will therefore be able to prevent it.*

4. New information for his partners

Arnold Janssen thought of making St. Michael the patron of the new mission house. In order that his partners would truly appreciate this great angel as patron, Fr. Arnold published two articles about St. Michael. At the end of the second article he mentions the connection of St. Michael to the new mission house:

May the great St. Michael gracefully receive these lines written in his honor! May God grant that through these lines we become more worthy of his protection. The yet-to-be-built German–Austrian mission house is to be placed under his special protection. This is the result of an inspiration which came on the feast of St Michael on September 29, 1874. Up to this day we believe we owe St Michael deep gratitude for all the help which we have enjoyed receiving from him until now. Hopefully he will protect us also in future.

5. More assuring information: support of Dutch – German bishops for the mission house

Fr. Arnolds assured the mission partners that the new mission house was not simply the crazy idea of a young German priest: it had received the blessing of the Bishops of the Netherlands and Germany. Fr. Arnold personally visited all the bishops and had their written endorsement.

He also told the mission partners that the house would be a thoroughly religious house. Therefore, he informed them of all the patron saints for this house, patrons whom he himself had chosen:

Mary, the Star of the Sea, the victor over all heresies and Seat of Divine Wisdom. Furthermore, St. Michael, the protector of the Church, patron of Germany and the foreign missions; St. Joseph, the protector of Mary and foster father of Jesus to whom we pray that he will also be our protector and provider. May we be helped particularly by the Divine Word which lives in the Sacred Heart of Jesus: the Divine Word is the Divine Wisdom, the mirror of the Father, the giver of the Holy Spirit and of the light which illumines each human being who comes into the world.

Finally, Fr. Arnold asks again for donations and in particular he asks his partners for prayer so that our dear Lord may give us a truly firm and solid foundation.

6. The goal is almost reached – almost in Steyl

We have accompanied Fr. Arnold as his partners on the way to the foundation of the Mission House. Fr. Arnold has given his partners a great deal of information: it is to be located in a safe place, the Netherlands; it is to be an Apostolic School and will be called after St. Michael; it has the approval and blessings of the Dutch and German / Austrian bishops. But Fr. Arnold has not yet informed his partners of the exact location of the house. This he did in the July 1875 issue of the *Little Messenger of the Sacred Heart*: the home of the new mission house is in Steyl near Venlo. And he does take his partners on a train journey from his place of residence, the town of Kempen, in Germany across the border to Venlo, in the Netherlands and from there on a hike to Steyl. He also wanted his partners to visit Steyl and so he published train schedules of various railway companies from Germany to Venlo and back from Venlo to places in Germany. Fr. Arnold had waited with this information because he first wanted to make sure that the house he intended to buy would really be sold to him. The purchase contract for the house had been signed on June 16, 1875. And on that day something had happened that could be considered the spiritual foundation of the new mission house. On that day he, seminarian Anzer in Regensburg/Bavaria and Fr. Peter Bill in Luxemburg, the first two who wanted to join him in the new Mission House, had dedicated themselves to the mission work of the new Mission House and to fulfilling the wishes of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. The Mission House, so Fr. Arnold promised, would never forget this origin and in remembrance of it, he chose the motto: *Vivat Cor Jesu in cordibus hominum* (May the Heart of Jesus live in the hearts of all people).

Now his partners on the journey to the founding the Mission House knew the spiritual foundation of the new mission house: to fulfill the intentions of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and that means to bring the love of Jesus, the love of the Triune God into the whole world.

One thing was still lacking: the actual opening of the Mission House. In August 1875 Fr. Arnold informed this mission partners that September 8 would be the day. The birthday of our Lady would also be the birthday of the new German–Dutch–Austrian mission house. In October 1875 Fr. Arnold published a report about September 8 and he began with words with which I will end this phase in the development of Fr. Arnolds mission partners on the way to becoming SVD partners. He wrote: *May I presume, dear reader, that you are a friend of this magazine as well as of that enterprise which has grown out of it? Then you will have followed with some interest the development of this holy work, as it has appeared in this magazine initially only in general hints, but then with always growing certainty. Therefore I owe you a description of that day which brought to the light of the world the child which had been lovingly taken care of for a long time, or must I not rather say, that was born so soon, yes sooner than our expectations?*

The child was born on September 8, 1875. And now Fr. Arnold was looking for partners who would help to keep the child alive, to become an adult and be active in the service of God's mission. In his sermon on September 8 he had said: *Let us hope that God will bless this small beginning and that He may give it that support and money and people without which and without whom the new house will never fulfill its purpose.*

With these words Fr. Arnold began to look for new partners, this time for his partners in helping the new Mission House grow and carry out its purpose.

D. FR. ARNOLD'S MISSIONHOUSE PARTNERS

The first mission house was an old building and right from the beginning it was clear to Fr. Arnold that a new building had to be built. The groundbreaking ceremony for the new house took place on August 17, 1876. But there was a problem as he wrote in the *Little Messenger of the Sacred Heart*.

It is true, we have only a little bit of money and we don't need many keys to protect our money from thieves, still our Lord God has many treasure boxes. Trust is one key to them.

Yet now we pray to the Queen of Heaven. May She help. We build for heaven to fill it with immortal souls. And may therefore the busy hands come which will place stone upon stone until the house is completed. And may the pious donors come who will place the stones into the hands of the builders, so that in honor of our holy patrons a new house of God may be built. Great and holy is its purpose. May it be reached.

May God bless the new house and may he see to it that it will be happily completed. Our trust in God is great, but the pious lovers of the missions must still come and give us their needed love donations so that we will be able to complete the house. Well, they did come, and in September 1877 the house was completed.

E. A THIRD ORDER

So far I have spoken in very general terms about the mission house partners; but there are also faces of particular men and women who kept the new mission house alive and even helped it to expand:

The first one and the pioneer of all the SVD lay partners is Miss Helene Wolters, a business woman from Venlo. When she saw the poverty in the new house, she immediately organized other business women in Venlo and they regularly sent all kinds of items including food, clothing, and furniture for the house. When she was strongly criticized by her own relatives for helping this unknown German priest, she only said in reply: *When I saw Rector Janssen for the first time and heard him speak, I was immediately convinced that this was a truly pious priest who had only the honor of God and the well-being of his fellow human beings in mind. It is not difficult to recognize a pious priest. For that reason I had great trust that God was with him and that his work would be successful.*

Mr. Craghs, was a widower from a village near Kevelaer in Germany not so far from Steyl. After the death of his wife he gave his new born daughter to relatives to raise and with his 10-year-old son he went to Steyl and offered his help to Arnold Janssen. He became Arnold Janssen's most important and most trusted lay cooperater in material matters. His son became an SVD priest and his daughter a Holy Spirit Sister.

Mrs. Emilie Huch from Silesia gave Arnold Janssen the idea of starting a mission house in Nyssa, in those days German Silesia and now Poland. She and her husband remained life-long strong supporters of Fr. Arnold.

Last but not least was Miss Magdalena Leitner. Together with her confessor, the Vincentian priest Fr. F. Medits, she had a great influence on Fr. Arnold. Through both of them he became the great devotee to the Holy Spirit as we know him today. In her visions she received messages from the Holy Spirit for Fr. Arnold and the SVD. At the time Fr. Arnold and his confreres believed in these visions which influenced the Founder's spirituality and his three foundations.

All these men and women and probably many more did not form an association of mission partners, but as individuals they were partners in the mission of Fr. Arnold.

There must have been many people like that and therefore it doesn't come as a surprise that in the course of time people became interested in the formation of a third order of the SVD. During the first SVD General Chapter from 1884-1886 the four capitulars, Fr. Arnold, his brother Fr. John Janssen, Fr. Hermann Wegener and Fr./Bishop Anzer established the SVD as a religious congregation with vows and also discussed the possibility of such a third order. They came up with these essential features of a possible third Order:

1. Since some pious people living in the world wish to join us in our spiritual endeavors, it was resolved to offer them that possibility by establishing an institute of secular cooperators as mission helpers. It was resolved:
 - a. to grant them a share in all the good works and prayers of the Society;
 - b. to nominate Mother Gregoria [Miss Leitner] as first mission helper, as a sign of our trust in her and as a token of gratitude for all the good she has done for the Society.
2. The conditions for acceptance as a mission helper are:
 - a. Leading a good Christian Life;
 - b. Joining spiritually in the endeavors of the Society of the Divine Word;
 - c. Where possible receiving Communion on the feast of Pentecost for the missionary work of our Society, offering it up at least partially for the greater sanctification of the priestly state;
 - d. In addition, offering up a Holy Communion once a year for the mission work of our Society, if possible totally for this purpose, in order thus to have a greater share in the good works of the Society.
 - e. Finally, sometimes to give a monetary donation to help the missions or urge someone else to do so.
3. The Apostolic See will be asked to grant spiritual graces and favors to the Institute of Helpers.
4. Only the General and those he delegates have the right to accept someone as a mission helper, who thus shares in the good works of the Society.
5. Every month, whenever possible on the first Monday, in every larger house of the Society a Mass should be offered for the mission helpers and their intentions, and the members of the Society are invited to offer their Holy Communion for the same intention. At the same time the helpers are invited to commend to God the Holy Spirit at Communion or in their prayers, if possible on this day or another day, the works and intentions of the Society.” (In: Josef Alt, *Journey in Faith*, p. 213-214)

This idea of a Third Order never materialized. Actually, mission partners were not a topic in the SVD until in our modern time. The 2012 General Chapter spoke about associated lay groups, not of a third order.

CONCLUSION

Convinced by his experience of the Apostleship of Prayer that God wanted baptized lay people to be missionaries, Fr. Arnold looked for as many lay people as possible who would join him in his God-given mission work: First partners in world mission animation, then partners for the founding of a mission house for foreign world wide missions, followed by partners in keeping the mission house alive and expanding it. And finally there was the deliberation concerning a possible third order. What strikes me is how he practiced this mission partnership: he encouraged the partners first of all to pray – and then he fed them with information about the spiritual and material progress of the foundation. In that way the founding and life of the mission house were Fr Arnold's and his partners' common mission, based on the conviction that God wants this new mission house. And that was the strongest possible motivation for being together as Fr. Arnold's partners in the service of mission.