

For your reflection

Some last words of advice from Arnold Janssen to religious (October 6, 1908)

Should the thought ever arise that things would be nicer elsewhere, that it would be better to return to the world, oppose it resolutely. Those are temptations. They arise in religious life at times and that is not a bad thing. The Lord God wants his servants to prove faithful in strife.

... Remain faithful to prayer, remain faithful in your duty, keep faithful to your vocation even if temptations come (Chronicle of the Motherhouse of the Adoration Sisters, Steyl II, p. 198).

FAREWELL VISITS – LAST WISHES

On September 25, 1908 Fr. Arnold had returned to Steyl after having been away for several months. On October 1st he visited the Missionary Sisters; in his talk he expressed his joy over the great number of men and women who had made their retreat either in the mission house or in the sisters' convent in 1908.

"I heard that that altogether there were more than 5000, and that 2000 and more were here in this house. We must thank the Lord God for bringing them here; it is a large number, for 5000 could be a big town. ... I know the Sisters had to make many sacrifices, because when the house is full of guests, the residents of the house have to make do with a small space in a corner ... That makes a truly good impression on the guests which they take home with them. ... I counsel you, good Sisters, to zealously adore God the Holy Spirit and the Most Sacred Heart. ...

In the early years I did a great deal for the Servants of the Holy Spirit; some things I did at home; I taught the Sisters Spanish and saw to it that they were better educated. My manifold duties prevent me from doing that now. I thank the Lord God that he has placed Rev. Fr. Director General [auf der Heide] at my side. ... You yourselves can look with confidence to the future. It is obvious that God has blessed the Sisters. His favor comes clearly and plainly to light in the successes here and in the missions. However, the Lord's vineyard is still so big, there is still so much work to be done; we have to support it with prayer. Prayers to the Holy Spirit are much more important, so that the grace of the Holy Spirit will prepare and enlighten the hearts of the people" (Sr. Paula Anna Jostock, Chronicle of the Motherhouse of the Missionary Sisters, 1908-1911, pp. 26-27, 29, 30-31).

On October 6, Fr. Arnold visited the Adoration Sisters. He strongly recommended to them the veneration of the Blessed Trinity and in particular of the Holy Spirit: "It always gives me joy when I see that you piously worship the third person of the most blessed Trinity, the Holy Spirit. You have done that until now, continue doing it also in the future." ... "He then added jokingly that among the Sisters there would surely be one who could tell a joke and, if any Sister looked sad, could cheer her up." Before leaving them he blessed each Sister individually; in the chronicle we read: "All the Sisters had to gather at the entrance. ... It really touched us to see the venerable old man standing in the midst of his Sisters, who were kneeling around him, and how he went to each one and gave her his last blessing. ... All the Sisters were in a happy mood, even though the joy was mingled with sadness, because Fr. Superior General said goodbye to us in such a solemn way, as if it were for the last time".

Fr. Arnold was then also given a tour of the house and garden. When he came to the cemetery and the grave of the good Mother Maria [Helena Stollenwerk] all the Sisters had to come and pray with him in turn 7 times "Jesus, Mary, Joseph!" for Mother Maria and all those who rested in this cemetery. He thoroughly enjoyed the many beautiful flowers in the cemetery. "When we reached the gate, our dear Father said farewell to us.... Fr. Director General [auf der Heide] said: "Fr. Superior General will come back again next year." Fr. Superior General smiled and shrugged his shoulders doubtfully (Chronicle of the Motherhouse of the Adoration Sisters, Steyl II, pp. 197, 198-199).

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The Arnoldus Family Story

As in the September issue, in this issue of "The Arnoldus Family Story" the *Kulturkampf* (cultural battle) again takes centre place. In September we got to know some of the important *Kulturkampf* – laws. Now we will first look at the Bishops' reactions to those laws and then at Arnold Janssen's position with regard to the *Kulturkampf*.

The Bishops' reactions to the "Kulturkampf" – "Cultural Battle" Laws

The laws which were to injure the Catholic Church very much were those of May 1873 – the so-called "May laws" –, particularly the one requiring state approval for appointment to clerical office, such as parish priest. The Prussian bishops rejected these laws and "forbade any kind of cooperation in their enforcement. With the exception of a small minority (so-called state priests, state Catholics), the clergy and the laity followed these directives". The bishops themselves continued to appoint priests without state approval (Jedin, ed., transl. Margit Resch, *History of the Church*, volume IX, Burns & Oates, London, 1981, pp. 37-38), for which they were fined and if they did not pay, imprisoned. In 1874/75 "five out of eleven Prussian bishops spent several months in prison", among them Archbishop Melchers of Cologne, and from March 18–April 27, 1875 Fr. Arnold's own Bishop Brinkmann of Muenster. The Catholics revered these bishops as true martyrs. Priests who carried out their pastoral duties without state approval were even threatened with expulsion from Germany. In Prussia "more than a thousand parishes were without pastors" (*ibid.*, p. 43).

Archbishop Melchers was imprisoned from March 31–October 9, 1874. Not very long after his release from prison, Fr. Arnold visited him to tell him of his plan to start a mission house for the foreign missions. Having just gone through the unjust prison experience, the bishop unsurprisingly answered: "We live in a time when everything seems to be shaking and sinking. Now you are coming and want to start something new?" (Alt, *Journey in Faith*, p. 57).

Since even prison could not break the bishops' resistance to the *Kulturkampf* laws, a number of bishops were deposed by the Royal Tribunal of Ecclesiastical Affairs, among them also Archbishop Melchers and Bishop Brinkmann. According to Church law, the bishops remained in office; they went into exile, "where they tried to rule over their dioceses with the help of secret delegates" (Jedin, ed., *History of the Church*, vol. IX, 1981, p. 40). In autumn 1875 Bishop Brinkmann reportedly went into exile to Roermond in the Netherlands. That means that about the same time that Fr. Arnold inaugurated St.

Michael's mission house in Steyl, Diocese of Roermond, his own bishop of Muenster found refuge in the very same diocese! It was from his place of exile that on May 25, 1880 Bishop Brinkmann officially released Fr. Arnold, his brother John Janssen and his close co-worker Hermann Wegener from the diocese of Muenster, so that they could dedicate themselves for the rest of their lives to the mission house in Steyl. At the end of this hand-written document the Bishop wrote: *Dat ex loco nostri exilii, die 25 Maji 1880 – given from the place of our exile, May 25, 1880* (Arnold Janssen Generalate Archives SVD, No. 30866). The bishop did not give the name of the place, for his whereabouts had to be kept secret and he had to change location several times.

Arnold Janssen and the “Kulturkampf” – “Cultural Battle”

From the summer of 1874, Catholic public gatherings, associations and newspapers “were subject to strict police control” (Jedin, ed., *History of the Church*, vol. IX, p. 40). But that did not prevent Arnold Janssen from publishing his mission magazine *Kleiner Herz-Jesu-Bote* – “Little Messenger of the Sacred Heart”, already from January 1874, then in 1878 the *Heilige Stadt Gottes* – “Holy City of God” and in 1880 the *St. Michaels-Kalender* – “St. Michael's Almanac”.

It was just at the beginning of this summer of 1874, in the June issue of the *Kleiner Herz-Jesu-Bote*, that Fr. Arnold encouraged parents to allow their sons to study for the priesthood if they wished to do so. He wrote: *“Due to the present difficulties... we probably will be faced with a great lack of priests in future. That is not good. This lack will be doubly felt when the time of the final victory of the church comes, the victory we are hoping for. ...Therefore we request Christian parents: If they have sons who show the inclination and ability to become priests, they should by no means prevent their children from studying because of the present difficulties. ... Under ordinary circumstances a proper course of studies up to ordination takes 12-14 years. That is a long time during which a lot will change”* (*Kleiner Herz-Jesu-Bote*, June 1874, p. 50). With these words Fr. Arnold predicted nothing less than the final victory of the church. To make such a prediction in his mission magazine at the time that the press was subject to particularly strict police control demanded a lot of courage!

For Fr. Arnold the “Kulturkampf” even had a positive side. In February 1874 he wrote in the *Kleiner Herz-Jesu-Bote*:

“God is most marvelous in all his ways. Even in the present affliction he certainly has a loving plan in mind. This distress has come after so much prayer [asking that it might not come] and for that reason we cannot possibly regard it as a misfortune. Of course, here and there we are experiencing quite significant abuses. Generally speaking, however, it will have a beneficial effect (*Kleiner Herz-Jesu-Bote*, February 1874, p. 18).

In another article of the same issue of the *Kleiner Herz-Jesu-Bote* he wrote:

“God is allowing so many priests to be driven out of Germany. On the other hand they cannot get peaceful employment in the main area served by the St. Boniface Association. In all this God is giving us Germans a hint. For with regard to preaching the faith, compared to France we have done so little up to now to carry out the Lord's command ‘go into all the world’. (Ibid., p. 17).

For Fr. Arnold it was clear: Through the “*Kulturkampf*” – the “cultural battle”, through the expulsion of those priests who disobeyed the “*Kulturkampf*” laws, God was telling the German Catholics: It is high time for you to make your contribution to the World Mission! Send your priests who can't work in Germany any longer to the missions!

ONE HUNDRED YEARS AGO – APPROACHING DEATH

For Arnold Janssen, October 1908 was to be the last month of his life during which he could lead the religious missionary congregations he had founded. On November 1st he had to hand over the governance to Assistant Superior General, Fr. Nicholas Blum. Let us think back to 1908 and accompany our spiritual father during this last stage of his life.

On October 29, 1908 Fr. Arnold was still able to write to Bishop Henninghaus, Vicar Apostolic of our mission in South Shantung in China:

“Right now I am still burdened with a great deal of work. However, as soon as time allows, I will attend to everything that is still outstanding. Finally I ask for your Episcopal blessing and commend myself to the prayers of your Grace. Leading such a big congregation is not easy, and one certainly needs grace from above” (Alt. *Arnold Janssen SVD, Briefe nach China* (Letters to China), vol. III, Rome 2002, p. 275).

However, time did not allow him to do what was still outstanding. For already the next day, Friday, October 30, Fr. Arnold's way of the cross began, the path that finally led to his death. Signing letters, “his pen slipped from his fingers” (Bornemann, Arnold Janssen, English edition, p. 510).

About the next day, October 31, Fr. auf der Heide, one of Fr. Arnold's closest co-workers, wrote:

“It was during lunch on the day before All Saints Day 1908 that Most Reverend Fr. Superior General told his secretary and me: ‘I do not know what will happen to me. A change is going on in my body; I fear a stroke. You probably noticed how unsteady I was in my movements this morning.’ ... During the afternoon coffee break and also during the evening meal it was noticed that Fr. Superior General did not see some of the dishes right in front of him; however, his appetite was good. So I asked him if he did not feel well; he answered: ‘I am fine.’ Also after evening prayers he spoke to me serenely and fully resigned to God's will (Fritz Bornemann, *Nachrichten über Krankheit und Tod unseres Stifters* (Concerning the sickness and death of our founder), *Verbum Supplementum* 10, Rome 1969, p. 52).

I ADORE THE
HOLY WILL OF GOD!

(Arnold Janssen, October 6, 1908, to the Adoration Sisters in Steyl)