

FR. FERDINAND MEDITS CM BACK IN STEYL

Fr. Medits' activities in Steyl

On August 2, 1888 Fr. Medits came once again from Vienna to Steyl. Having given a retreat for the priests of the mission house, on August 11 he started the novitiate for the elder priests who had not yet had a proper novitiate. This program was to last for one year. After his return to Vienna on August 28, Fr. Arnold wrote to China: The novitiate program which Fr. Medits had begun, Fr. Wegener and he (Arnold) had to continue.

Fr. Medits' criticism of Fr. Arnold

Before Fr. Medits returned to Steyl he wrote a fairly long letter to Fr. Arnold and touched on several points which seemed very important following his conversations with confreres in Steyl.

Being the founder, Fr. Arnold surely had to be strict; yet it must not be a cold strictness without any feelings for the confreres; rather it had to be motherly strictness which attracts and builds up. The founder must learn to trust the confreres. "Signs of personal attention are important, for example, on birthdays or name days, on the anniversaries of ordination and profession. The rector should offer one Mass a week for his subjects." He should mention items of news taken from the activities of the Society. Furthermore "the rector should settle on a definite schedule for the community" and shouldn't change so much. By 1888 "the community numbered 230 students and 100 Brothers. For a community of that size, frequent changes in the daily schedule had to be avoided. The need for a fixed order was all the greater because now there were several departments in the house with different persons in charge" (*ibid.*, pp. 183-184).

Fr. Arnold learns

Fr. Arnold accepted the criticism; he "drew up a calendar of the name days of the members and regularly sent greetings on those occasions to the confreres overseas. He began to give weekly conferences to the priests, and picked out bits of information from his correspondence to keep them informed of what was going on in the Society. He called meetings of the different councils - general, provincial and local. All this, of course, did not happen overnight but took place gradually. In the photographs that were taken of him, we can discern a progressive change from the stern features of the teacher - disciplinarian to the more serene countenance, if not of a mother, then at least of a father". Fr. Arnold learned, "he adapted himself and became the servant of his enterprise" (*ibid.*, p. 184).

Blessed New Year

Trust in the Lord with courage!

It is impossible for him to desert those who firmly trust in him

St. Arnold Janssen to St. Joseph Freinademetz



Divine Word Missionaries Secretariat Arnold Janssen Steyl

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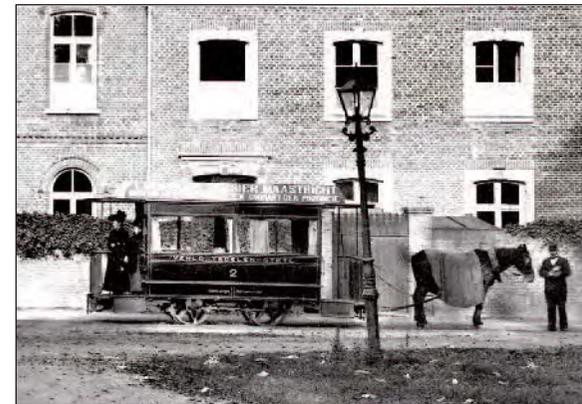
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The Arnoldus Family Story

OFFER OF A NEW MISSION

During the first months of 1888 Cardinal Simeoni, the Prefect of the Propaganda in Rome, asked Fr. Arnold to send missionaries to the archdiocese of Dakar (today Bangladesh). On June 8, 1888 Fr. Arnold sent a negative reply to the Cardinal: "He said they did not have the necessary personnel. Besides, only older missionaries and those of proven virtue could be sent there, for in one part of the territory men and women went around completely unclothed. 'I do not want to send missionaries who are too young to such tribes and I don't have any older ones.' Anyway, Bishop Anzer was demanding more missionaries for South Shantung. 'Your Eminence, what use is it to begin new missions if we cannot properly look after the mission we already have?'" (in Josef Alt, *Journey in Faith*, transl. Frank Mansfield, Jacqueline Mulberge, Steyler Verlag Nettetal, 2002, p.674).

PROGRESS: TRAM CONNECTION BETWEEN VENLO (STATION) AND STEYL



In August 1888 the "Kleiner Herz-Jesu-Bote" (Little Messenger of the Sacred Heart) announced the dates for the autumn retreat in Steyl. At the same time the readers were informed of the introduction of a horse tram line from Venlo to Steyl and back. Eight times a day the tram travelled in each direction and one trip costed 30 pennies.

PROGRESS ON THE WAY TO THE FOUNDATION OF A CONGREGATION OF MISSIONARY SISTERS

Life in the little convent of the "Three Lindens"

Helena Stollenwerk, Hendrina Stenmanns, Theresia Sicke and Gertrud Hege-mann were the first candidates for a congregation of missionary sisters. The way to the eventual foundation included several stages: The first one ended on July 14, 1888. During the first stage the candidates were domestic workers helping the

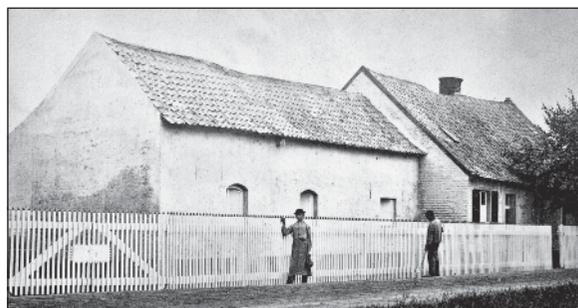
German Sisters of Divine Providence who took care of kitchen and laundry. When the last Sisters of Divine Providence left St. Michael's mission house for good on July 12, 1888, the four women had to leave St. Michael's as well. They found a new home in a small house near the mission house which Fr. Arnold had bought from the tailor Thürlings. About this house Mother Maria wrote in her chronicle that they "called it the little white house of the Three Lindens. Beside the house were three linden trees and they were to encourage our zeal in the practice of the three theological virtues, faith, hope and charity" (*Life in the Convent of the Three Lindens*, from the chronicles of M. Maria, Helena Stollenwerk and M. Andrea, Gertrud Hegemann, *In their own words...*2, compiled and transl. Jacqueline Mulberge, p. 6).

In the convent of the "Three Lindens"

The little house was to be a real little convent; Mother Maria writes: "On the street front there was a sturdy fence; in the centre opposite the front door was a small gate on the side of which was a rod, attached to a wire with a bell inside the house. Any-

one who needed to come in could ring to draw attention.

"You came first into a small reception room. There was a fairly large, simple but attractive crucifix and a small picture of the nativity embellished at the top with the words, 'What the Saviour's crib has to tell us', and below with the verse: 'Make the



shrine of your heart into a crib where Mary will faithfully keep watch. And invite St. Joseph, too, to lovingly carry out his role as protector.' This picture was especially precious to us because we dearly hoped that here we would begin our true religious life" (*Life in the Three Lindens*, p. 8). And, so Mother Maria continued, "we wanted to prepare ourselves as well as possible for it through prayer and work and faithful observation of our daily order." In the little room there were also a small table and two chairs. "The rest of the house was our cloister."

The daily order in the convent of the three lindens (on weekdays)

- 4.25 am Rising
- 4.45 am Morning prayer and meditation
- 5.25 am At the ringing of the church bells, walk to the mission house church
- 6.05 am Back to our convent
- 6.15 am Back to the convent on days of communion, afterwards cleaning
- 6.50 am Breakfast in silence, work
- 9.00 am Second breakfast for those who need it
- 9.15 am Silent prayer in the convent chapel
- 9.20 am Spiritual reading and work
- 11.53 am Examination of conscience and spiritual adoration of the Blessed Sacrament

- 12.00 noon Lunch, work.
 - 4.00 pm Afternoon coffee, 5 minutes prayer in the convent chapel, ... 1 hour recreation, conversation together with light work.
 - 7.00 pm Evening meal. Then conversation and recreation for 45 minutes – (not on Saturday evenings)
 - 9.15 pm Evening prayer. On Mondays and Thursdays at 9 pm
 - 9.30 pm Retiring for the night (from the chronicle of Mother Maria)
- On Sundays and holidays the rising was at 4.45 am and retiring at 8.30 pm.

Visitors to the convent

Visitors were received in the small reception room. In case of visiting relatives the women could meet them there. All others, however, "who came on errands for the Mission House and so on, settled their business here. In the wall there was a window, a small pane of which could be opened and closed from the inside. The glass was painted over and in front of it there was a semi-transparent curtain. If we had to speak to anyone, we opened the window pane so that we could hear."

The living quarters of the women

Within the house there was a little chapel, a bedroom with six little cells, separated by curtains. "All that was in each was a bed with the basic necessities, a small cross, two or three little paper pictures that had been cut out of the 'Stadt Gottes' or the 'Little Messenger of the Sacred Heart', the most necessary toilet articles and a small mat. We hung our clothes on nails on the wall or on the bedposts." Another room was the workroom. In this room was a sewing machine, a table, a chair for each one and a stove. Here the laundry was folded and repaired, e.g. socks darned, underwear and bedlinen, etc., mended. "Leaving the workroom we went along at the side towards the garden and entered the kitchen. There was a small cooking stove, the necessary items for making coffee, a table and a small cabinet." "The kitchen also served as a dining room and at times for folding the laundry, as well. We took the chairs from the workroom to the kitchen at mealtimes. A small passage led from the kitchen to the yard where the pump was." Then there was a small room "that looked as though it had served as a stable for goats in former times. It had been fitted out so that socks and stockings could be hung up there, those that were not finished and those that had been darned as well, until they were packed into the baskets and sent to the Mission House. All the windows of the house were painted over. We could hardly go into the attic, above the rooms, because there was a danger that the ceiling would fall down" (Mother Maria, Chronicle, in *Life in the Convent of the Three Lindens*, pp. 8-12).

The four women were content with their little convent, it reminded them so much of the poor little house of Nazareth, as Mother Maria wrote in her chronicle.

EPISCOPAL APPROBATION OF THE SEPTEMBER 1885 RULE

On August 1, 1888 Bishop Boermans of Roermond approved the September 1885 Rule. The archbishop of Vienna approved the Rule for the archdiocese of Vienna and forwarded it to the ministry of education (Bornemann, *Arnold Janssen*, transl. John Vogelgesang, Arnoldus Press Manila 1975, p. 207).