



15 January 2021
St. Arnold Janssen's day

Dear Confreres, Sisters, Lay Mission Partners, Friends, Benefactors and Relatives,

January 15 is the feast day of our Founder, Saint Arnold Janssen. Reflecting on the life and mission of Saint Arnold and looking at our present situation, I would like to share with you three pertinent points for our life and mission.

The first is Communication. As a prophetic act, Saint Arnold courageously made use of the printing press to disseminate the Good News during the challenging times that he lived in. This is his legacy for us especially in this time of crisis: to make the best use of the communication media. In our days, the challenge is not so much how to create the media; but more about the true and reliable content and the responsible way of using them. In the flux of fake news and misleading information, we need to use the media to tell the truth. When others try to manipulate the current crisis for their own benefit and selfish interests, it is essential to employ the various platforms of print and digital media to address the injustice done to the weak and vulnerable of our human family and the exploitation of the nature. So, our missionary vocation reminds us of our responsibility to keep it real and true in the modern digital world!

The second is the promotion of the importance of science for our life and mission. Saint Arnold was a teacher of mathematics and physics. He made efforts to give due space to science that would in turn shape his spirituality and would help him engage with the practical issues of mission. In order to promote education, he insisted that wherever the missionaries would take over a mission or begin a parish, they would make sure that a school must be attached to it. Later, he was supportive of Fr. Wilhelm Schmidt in his plan to start the international journal of *Anthropos*, which is of crucial importance to the *Anthropos* tradition of the SVD. Given this time of pandemic, it is imperative to recognize the indispensable role of science and the necessity to listen to the guidance of the scientists and other experts in order to organize our life and do our mission. The spirituality that we inherit from Saint Arnold does not condemn rationality but complements it. Our educational apostolate and the institutes of higher learning are the fruits of this dynamic encounter between reason and faith. I would like to emphasize the contribution made by the human sciences like psychology and counseling towards mental health which has regained much attention during the current pandemic. Our commitment to human well-being and integral growth of persons clearly entails providing the psychological assistance to those suffering, especially to help them cope with stress, fear and anxiety. So, our life and mission enriched by science, illumines us, and makes us more effective.

The third is the urgency of family and youth ministries in our mission. Saint Arnold showed a special concern for the family. In fact, he animated the families of his epoch for prayers and published a family magazine with the objectives of entertainment, formation of faith and general knowledge, and vocation promotion. In our time, especially during the period of lockdown, we realize that the family life becomes

extremely important but also often difficult, particularly, how to support one another while facing the uncertainty of jobs or loss of income or dealing with the challenges of children's education, or bearing the pain caused by death of family members due to of the COVID-19 without being able to be with them in the last hours of their life, or overcoming the pressure of staying confined in the houses or apartments for a long time. Therefore, our attention should turn in a special way to families. Pope Francis has proclaimed this year as the "Year of Saint Joseph" and the "Year of *Amoris Laetitia* Family". Looking at Saint Joseph means looking at the family. And looking at the family will make us realize the necessity of accompanying the youth.

Dear confreres, sisters, lay mission partners, benefactors, and friends,

May Saint Arnold continue inspiring us, especially in this time of pandemic, to optimize the available resources and tools of communication technologies to propagate the word of truth, love and hope; to make use of science in our life and mission and to commit ourselves to journey with the families and the youth. In September 1907 Saint Arnold wrote to Fr. Degenhardt in Chile who reported some difficulties in the mission: "I would encourage you to look to the future with increased confidence, despite all tribulations. A sapling that is shaken by the wind puts down sturdy roots, and it is to be hoped that it will be the same with us." This is also our wish and prayer: that all of us be able to look to the future with more confidence despite all the challenges. Going through all these difficult experiences, may we be more rooted in the Word and committed to God's mission.

Happy Feast Day of Saint Arnold!


Budi Kleden, SVD
and the Leadership Team