

BOOKLET TO PRINT

# Saint Arnold Janssen

*Life, prayer, novena and pilgrimage*

Feast day: January 15

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IN BRIEF

## Saint Arnold Janssen

*German priest, founder of the Society of the Divine Word and of two missionary congregations of sisters.*

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| **Feast day** | January 15 |
| **Born** | November 5, 1837, Goch, Rhineland, Germany |
| **Died** | January 15, 1909, Steyl, Netherlands |
| **Canonized** | October 5, 2003, by Pope John Paul II |
| **Era** | 20th century |

## In this booklet


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Novena to Saint Arnold Janssen

Saint Michael Mission House in Steyl, Tomb of Saint Arnold Janssen

Credits and sources



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LIFE

# Saint Arnold Janssen

Saint Arnold Janssen was a nineteenth-century German priest, founder of the Society of the Divine Word, one of the great missionary congregations of the Catholic Church, whose members are known in the English-speaking world as the Divine Word Missionaries (SVD). A simple schoolteacher with neither money nor connections, he opened a house to train missionaries at Steyl, in the Netherlands, in 1875, because the Kulturkampf prevented him from doing so in Germany. He went on to found two congregations of sisters. He died at Steyl on January 15, 1909, was canonized by Pope John Paul II in 2003, and his feast day is January 15.

## Who was Saint Arnold Janssen?

Arnold Janssen was born on November 5, 1837, in Goch, in the Lower Rhine region, then part of Prussia. He was the second of ten children in a modest and deeply believing family, which passed on to him a love of work well done and a solid faith.

Ordained a priest for the diocese of Münster on August 15, 1861, he was appointed to teach science and mathematics at the secondary school in Bocholt, where he taught for twelve years.

A reserved priest, he stood out first of all for his piety. Deeply devoted to the Sacred Heart, he became diocesan director of the Apostleship of Prayer. This service gradually opened him to the needs of the Church throughout the world. Little by little the conviction grew in him that the Church in Germany should take its share in bringing the Gospel to distant peoples.



*Saint Arnold Janssen, founder of the Society of the Divine Word.*

## Key dates in the life of Saint Arnold Janssen

- **November 5, 1837**: Born in Goch, in the Rhineland.
- **August 15, 1861**: Ordained a priest for the diocese of Münster.
- **1861-1873**: Teacher at Bocholt.
- **1874**: Launches the magazine *Little Messenger of the Sacred Heart*, devoted to the missions.
- **September 8, 1875**: Opens the house at Steyl, the founding date of the Society of the Divine Word.
- **March 2, 1879**: The first two missionaries, Joseph Freinademetz and Johann Baptist Anzer, leave for China.
- **1889**: Founds the Missionary Sisters Servants of the Holy Spirit.
- **1896**: Founds the Sister Servants of the Holy Spirit of Perpetual Adoration.
- **January 15, 1909**: Dies at Steyl.

- **October 19, 1975**: Beatified by Pope Paul VI.
- **October 5, 2003**: Canonized by Pope John Paul II.

## A foundation in the middle of the Kulturkampf

In the early 1870s, Chancellor Bismarck launched the Kulturkampf against the Catholic Church: a series of laws that expelled religious orders, closed seminaries and sent several bishops to prison. It seemed the worst possible moment to found a new work. Arnold Janssen saw it instead as an opportunity: priests driven from their posts could go to the missions, and a training house could open just across the border.

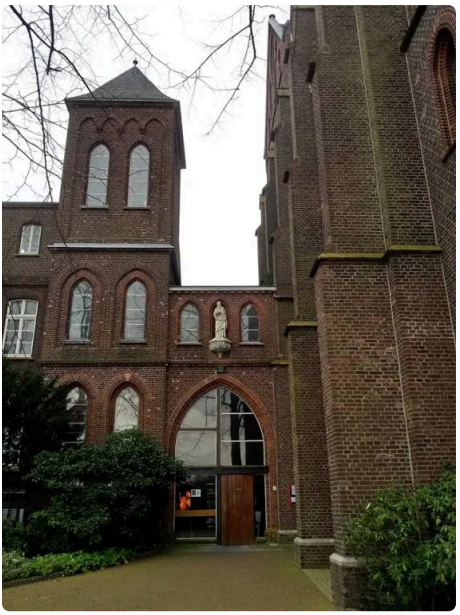
Many around him thought he was not suited to such an undertaking. Yet he bought a former inn at Steyl, a small Dutch village on the Meuse River, and opened his house there on September 8, 1875. He relied on Providence and on the gifts of thousands of readers of his magazine. A printing press set up at Steyl soon made it possible to spread magazines and calendars that made the missions known and financed the work.

## The Divine Word to the ends of the earth

The name he chose expressed the founder's intuition: to make the Word of God, Christ, known to all peoples. In 1879 the first missionaries left for China. One of them, Joseph Freinademetz, spent the rest of his life there and was canonized on the same day as his founder. Others followed to New Guinea, Africa and Latin America.

Arnold Janssen also understood that mission needed women. In 1889 he founded the Missionary Sisters Servants of the Holy Spirit, and then, in 1896, a contemplative branch devoted to perpetual adoration, whose prayer was to support the proclamation of the Gospel. At his death, his foundations were already present on several continents. Today more than 6,000 Divine Word Missionaries work in some 75 countries.

English-speaking Catholics meet his legacy in many places. In the United States, the Divine Word Missionaries have their headquarters at Techny, Illinois, and run Divine Word College in Epworth, Iowa. In the Philippines, where the Society is strongly present, it runs schools and universities, among them the University of San Carlos in Cebu.



*The St. Michael Mission House at Steyl, the cradle of the work.*

## Why is Saint Arnold Janssen invoked for the missions?

Arnold Janssen is not the official patron of a country or a profession, but he is naturally invoked for the missions and for missionary vocations. He was no providential hero: he was a reserved priest, without money and without connections. His holiness lies in his stubborn trust in God and his patient search for God's will.

He showed that an immense work can grow from a small beginning, as long as it is carried by prayer. He is prayed to for missionaries, for vocations, and for those who undertake a work without seeing how it will end. To pray with him, see the prayer to Saint Arnold Janssen and the novena to Saint Arnold Janssen.

## Symbols and how to recognize Saint Arnold Janssen in art

Because he lived in the age of photography, Arnold Janssen is usually shown as he appears in his portraits: an elderly priest in a black cassock, with a grave face. Statues often show him holding a book, a reminder of the Word of God to which he dedicated his society and of the printing press that supported it.



*A statue of Saint Arnold Janssen.*

## Where to pray to Saint Arnold Janssen

- **Steyl, Limburg, Netherlands**: the St. Michael Mission House, where he is buried.

- **Goch, North Rhine-Westphalia, Germany**: his hometown.
- The many churches and houses of the Society of the Divine Word around the world, including Techny, Illinois, in the United States.

PRAYER

# Prayer to Saint Arnold Janssen for the Missions

Saint Arnold Janssen placed his whole work under the sign of the Word of God and the Holy Spirit. The Society of the Divine Word has kept from him a short prayer, said every day by its members, and a motto. Below you will find both texts, followed by an original prayer by Saintspedia to Saint Arnold Janssen.

## The Divine Word prayer

> *"May the darkness of sin and the night of unbelief vanish before the light of the Word and the Spirit of grace, and may the Heart of Jesus live in the hearts of all people."*

Source: traditional prayer of the Society of the Divine Word, handed down from its founder, Arnold Janssen (late nineteenth century). English versions vary slightly.

> *"May the Triune God live in our hearts."*

Source: greeting and motto of Arnold Janssen (in Latin *Vivat Deus unus et trinus in cordibus nostris*, "May the one and triune God live in our hearts"), still used by the congregations he founded.

## Prayer to Saint Arnold Janssen for the missions

> *Saint Arnold Janssen, you longed for the Word of God to be known by every people: pray for today's missionaries. Support those who have left everything to proclaim the Gospel far from home.*
>
> *You began a great work in a modest house on the banks of the Meuse: teach us not to despise small beginnings, and to trust in Providence.*
>
> *You founded your congregations in a time of trial: give courage to Christians who are persecuted or discouraged, and raise up new missionary vocations in the Church.*
>
> *I also entrust to you my intention: (name it in silence).*
>
> *Obtain for me the grace to seek God's will in all things, and to let the Holy Spirit guide my life. Amen.*

This prayer is an original text by Saintspedia, free to use for personal and community prayer.

## When to pray this prayer

Saint Arnold Janssen's feast day is January 15, the day of his death in 1909. You can also pray to him in October, the month of the missions, or on September 8, the anniversary of the founding of Steyl. This prayer is especially fitting:

- for missionaries, especially Divine Word Missionaries and the Holy Spirit Sisters;
- for young people discerning a vocation to the priesthood or religious life;
- when you begin a project with few resources and must rely on Providence;
- for teachers, since he was one for twelve years.

You can also pray the novena to Saint Arnold Janssen from January 7 to 15, and read the life of Saint Arnold Janssen. He is buried at the St. Michael Mission House in Steyl, in the Netherlands.

NOVENA

# Novena to Saint Arnold Janssen

This novena is an original composition by Saintspedia, inspired by the life of Saint Arnold Janssen, founder of the Society of the Divine Word. It is not an official liturgical text. To finish it on his feast day, January 15, begin it on January 7. It can also be prayed at any time, especially during October, the month of the missions, before a new undertaking, or for a vocation.

## How to pray this novena

Each day, place your intention before God, read the short meditation, then say the prayer of the day, followed by an Our Father, a Hail Mary and a Glory Be. You may end each day with the Divine Word prayer: "May the darkness of sin and the night of unbelief vanish before the light of the Word and the Spirit of grace, and may the Heart of Jesus live in the hearts of all people." The small act suggested for the day helps carry the prayer into daily life.



*The St. Michael Mission House at Steyl.*

## Day 1: A family of faith

Arnold was the second of ten children in a modest family in Goch. His parents passed on to him a solid faith and a love of work well done. Holiness often begins at home, in the daily prayer and the honest work of ordinary families.

**Prayer:** Lord, bless our families. Make them schools of faith, work and love.

**Today:** Pray with your family, or thank God for those who taught you the faith.

## Day 2: A faithful teacher

For twelve years Arnold taught science and mathematics at Bocholt. He did not yet know the great work that awaited him. God prepares us in the duties of today for the missions of tomorrow.

**Prayer:** Lord, help me to be faithful in small things, and to do my daily work well for love of you.

**Today:** Do one task carefully, offering it to God.

## Day 3: The Heart of Jesus

Arnold was deeply devoted to the Sacred Heart and led the Apostleship of Prayer in his diocese. Through this prayer his heart opened to the needs of the whole world. Prayer widens the heart.

**Prayer:** Sacred Heart of Jesus, make my heart like yours, open to the needs of all people.

**Today:** Offer your day, in the morning, for the intentions of the Church throughout the world.

## Day 4: Reading the signs of the times

The Kulturkampf closed seminaries and drove priests from their posts. Where others saw only an obstacle, Arnold saw an opportunity for mission. God can bring good out of difficult times.

**Prayer:** Lord, open my eyes to see the opportunities you give me, even in times of trial.

**Today:** Look at a current difficulty and ask God what good he might draw from it.

## Day 5: A small beginning

On September 8, 1875, Arnold opened his mission house in a former inn at Steyl, with almost nothing. Many doubted him. Yet that small house became the cradle of a worldwide family. God loves small beginnings.

**Prayer:** Lord, teach me not to despise small beginnings, and to trust you with what I cannot yet see.

**Today:** Take the first small step in a good project you have been putting off.

## Day 6: The power of the printed word

Arnold used magazines and calendars printed at Steyl to make the missions known and to support them. Thousands of readers became partners in the work through their gifts and prayers. Every Christian can take part in the mission.

**Prayer:** Lord, bless all who use the media to spread your Word, and make me a partner in your mission.

**Today:** Share a good article, a prayer or a word of faith with someone.

## Day 7: Sent to China

In 1879 the first two missionaries left Steyl for China. One of them, Saint Joseph Freinademetz, gave his whole life to the Chinese people. To send missionaries is also to let go of those we love.

**Prayer:** Lord, bless missionaries far from home and the families who let them go.

**Today:** Pray for a missionary by name, or support a missionary work.

## Day 8: The Holy Spirit and the sisters

Arnold founded the Missionary Sisters Servants of the Holy Spirit, and then a contemplative branch devoted to perpetual adoration. Mission needs both active hands and hearts in prayer before the Blessed Sacrament.

**Prayer:** Come, Holy Spirit. Bless religious sisters, and raise up vocations to active and contemplative life.

**Today:** Spend a few minutes in adoration, in a church or wherever you are.

## Day 9: The Word to all peoples

Arnold Janssen died at Steyl on January 15, 1909. His foundations were already present on several continents, and today thousands of Divine Word Missionaries serve in some 75 countries. A humble, reserved priest had trusted God, and God did the rest.

**Prayer:** Lord, through the intercession of Saint Arnold Janssen, make your Word known to all peoples, and hear the intention of this novena.

**Today:** Pray for those who do not yet know Christ.

## Closing prayer

Saint Arnold Janssen, founder of the Society of the Divine Word, you trusted in Providence and began a great work from almost nothing. Pray for missionaries, for vocations, and for all who undertake a work without seeing its end. May the Triune God live in our hearts. I entrust to you the intention of this novena: (name it in silence). Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

To go further, read the life of Saint Arnold Janssen and the prayer to Saint Arnold Janssen.

PILGRIMAGE

# Saint Michael Mission House in Steyl, Tomb of Saint Arnold Janssen

Steyl is a small village in Dutch Limburg, on the banks of the Meuse, part of the municipality of Venlo and very close to the German border. It was here that Arnold Janssen opened the first house of the Society of the Divine Word in 1875, and here that he died and is buried. The missionary buildings that have grown up around that first house make Steyl the main place of pilgrimage tied to the saint.

## The cradle of a missionary congregation

In the midst of the Kulturkampf, when Prussian laws prevented the founding of a religious house in Germany, Arnold Janssen chose this village just across the border. He bought a former inn there, which was inaugurated on September 8, 1875. The house soon grew: a seminary, a printing press, a church. The first missionaries to leave for China in 1879 came from here, and the two congregations of sisters founded by Arnold Janssen also have their first houses here.



*The Saint Michael Mission House in Steyl.*

## Visiting Steyl

The visit takes in the Saint Michael Mission House and its church, where the tomb of Saint Arnold Janssen is located. The village is also home to the convent of the Holy Spirit Adoration Sisters, whose chapel welcomes the faithful for a time of silent prayer. A missions museum displays objects brought back from around the world by missionaries over the decades.

Here, too, you can remember Saint Arnold Janssen and his disciple Joseph Freinademetz, a missionary in China, who was canonized with him in 2003.

## Praying on site

At the tomb, you can entrust to Saint Arnold Janssen the missionaries you know, your own plans, and your intentions, then say the prayer of the Divine Word: "May the darkness of sin vanish before the light of the Word and the

Spirit of grace..." The full text is in the prayer to Saint Arnold Janssen. These suggestions are offered by Saintspedia.

## Other places of Saint Arnold Janssen

- **Goch** (North Rhine-Westphalia): his birthplace, just across the German border.
- **Bocholt**: the town where he taught for twelve years.
- **Münster**: the cathedral of the diocese for which he was ordained a priest in 1861.

## Practical information

Steyl is a few miles from the center of Venlo, reachable by car or by bicycle along the Meuse. Opening hours for the church, the museum, and the chapels vary with the seasons: check the official websites of the mission house and the museum before you come.

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