

## Arnold Janssen Spirituality Center

*Arnold Janssen Secretariado STEYL*

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# **The canonization of Arnold Janssen and Joseph Freinademetz: Their Message for Our Times**

“Canonization” is not only for the recognition of individual holiness, nor is it only to present a person as an intercessor before God. Canonization proposes a number of virtues that Christians should emulate, based on the life witness of a specific person.

Arnold Janssen and Joseph Freinademetz remind us of the fundamental identity and mission of the Church: we are a community of Jesus’ disciples, united in his love and sent by him to all peoples. Every local church must look beyond its own needs, urgent though they may be, so as to discover and respond to the most profound needs and aspirations of peoples of all cultures and races. The Church must be a community that extends an open armed welcome to all people, building a unity that protects and appreciates the richness of diversity.

The lives of Arnold and Joseph give expression to Jesus’ vision: a Kingdom where all peoples and cultures reach the fullness of life in the loving embrace of God. As sons and daughters of the God of love, we recognise ourselves as brothers and sisters in a new reality that challenges us to overcome the obstacles that we encounter in our daily journey towards God’s reign of love: racism, xenophobia, fear of other religious ways, lack of social solidarity, and a lukewarm or nonexistent faith.

Arnold Janssen, both personally and as a German citizen, felt responsible for his brothers and sisters who lived in the remotest corners of the world. Though he never left Europe, he dedicated his life to them. When he found it necessary he renounced his German citizenship so as to cross frontiers that were otherwise closed to him. And because the Kingdom transcends the limits of nationalities, cultures and races, he soon transformed his “German” foundation into an international community. In this way legitimate differences could not only be respected but also valued as a witness to the presence of God’s love. Arnold insisted that missionaries be educated in the social sciences so that they could systematically study the cultures and languages of other nations and so be able to appreciate the cultural richness of the people with whom they would work. A notable outcome of this concern was the establishment in 1906 of the *Anthropos Journal*.

Joseph Freinademetz once wrote that *“not even for 3000 coronas am I prepared to leave country and friends so as to relocate myself forever in a new world.”* But love for Jesus and for all of God’s people motivated him to do exactly that. He left country, family, friends, culture and language, to go to China, a world that was totally new to him. It was a difficult challenge. Struggles with the language and the new way of life provoked in him a “culture shock” where everything seemed dark and depressing. This same experience afflicts almost all those who have

to emigrate and put down roots in a new reality. But he was able to respond to the challenge. Though he never forgot the mountains that surrounded his native valley, he opted to become Chinese among the Chinese, even writing: “ I love China and the Chinese; I want to die among them and to be laid to rest among them”... “ I want to continue being Chinese even in heaven”. And so it turned out... There is a certain irony in the fact that the vicissitudes of history erased all trace of his tomb. It is now entirely impossible to separate him from China.

In both Arnold and Joseph one finds a deep love for the Word of God. In both there was an intense passion to be instruments of God’s will. And in both, one finds a living testimony that the Kingdom is open to all, no matter what the race, culture or language or way of life... Their openness was also able to include all, seeing in legitimate differences a source of enrichment, even in spite of the difficulties that can sometimes result.

Their lives do have something to say to us today. We live in a multicultural and multireligious world that compels people from the farthest ends of the earth to learn to live together side-by-side. If Arnold and Joseph were able to do it, why can’t we?

## **Arnold Janssen – Father, Leader and Founder**

Arnold Janssen was born on November 5th, 1837 in the German town of Goch – very close to the border with the Netherlands. His parents were Gerhard and Anna Katharina Janssen. Arnold was the second of 11 children; however, three of them died at a very young age.

His parents had a very deep faith. Daily prayer and daily work had been completely integrated into the life of the Janssen Family. For Mother Anna Katharina there was no question that she would attend Holy Mass daily. Arnold’s parents practised the words of St. Paul who said: Pray always; and so Arnold was brought up and formed in the spirit of prayer. It does not come as a surprise then that as a high school student of about 13 or 14 years he composed a long evening prayer which was not only prayed in his own family, but in other families as well.

From his childhood, Arnold Janssen’s desire had been to become a priest; however he did not like to become a priest who would spend all his life working in a parish; he wanted to be a priest and a teacher and his favourite subjects were mathematics and natural sciences. On August 15th, 1861 he was ordained a priest in the Cathedral of the German town of Münster ; and before that he had passed his exams as a high school teacher.

After his ordination his bishop sent him to the town of Bocholt, and from 1861-1873 he taught at the High School there. His students liked best his natural science lessons. He also helped the priests in the parish in Bocholt whenever his help was needed.

While in Bocholt Arnold Janssen joined the international “Apostolate of Prayer in union with the Sacred Heart of Jesus.” This Apostolate of Prayer originated in France and from there it had spread all over Europe. In the service of this apostolate he discovered his own apostolic and missionary vocation. He became an Apostle of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and his motto was: May

the Sacred Heart of Jesus live in the hearts of all people! The wish to work exclusively for the mission of the church grew stronger and stronger, and finally he quit teaching in 1873 and moved to the town of Kempen. There he became chaplain at a convent of nuns who also ran schools for girls. He celebrated Mass for the nuns and helped to teach in the girls' high school whenever his help was needed. Otherwise, in Kempen he was free to dedicate himself completely to the mission of the church in non-Christian overseas countries. The very first thing he did was to found a mission magazine, of which the first issue was published in January 1874. Its name was "Kleiner Herz-Jesu-Bote", that is the "Little Messenger of the Sacred Heart of Jesus".

The more he occupied himself with the missionary work of the church the more he became painfully aware of the fact that the Catholics in Germany, Austria and the Netherlands had no mission house to train their own missionaries and send them overseas whereas other countries like France, Italy, England and even the Protestants in Germany had such mission houses. After he had met several times the visiting Bishop Raimondi PIME of Hongkong (formerly one of the first missionaries to Papua New Guinea) who had encouraged him to found such a mission house himself, it gradually became clear to him that God had in fact called him to found the mission house.

Most people whom he told about his decision to found a mission house did not believe in his ability to undertake such a task. They rather ridiculed him. That, however, could not discourage him.

On the other hand there were also those who encouraged him in his decision, like Bishop Haneberg of Speyer. For a long time, so he wrote to Arnold Janssen, it had been his personal wish that such a mission house should be built. Surely, the Kulturkampf in Germany, that is the cultural war between mainly the Prussian government and the Catholic Church during which the Catholic Church was persecuted, caused grave problems to the church. However, that persecution of the church must not stop the execution of such a plan as Arnold Janssen had, but on the contrary, it must push it forward. The strength of the Catholic faith must not show itself only in negative remarks, but most of all in works built upon faith, the Bishop wrote.

Such words gave Arnold Janssen the courage to continue carrying out his plan.

Still more than those good words, his own faith and trust in God made him accept his new vocation. He himself once said:

"It necessarily belongs to God's guidance that he reveals to us his intentions only gradually. How else would we learn to walk before him in the light of faith and unconditional trust?"

That meant for him: as soon as he had come to the conviction that God wanted a particular task to be done and that God wanted him to do it, with unshakable trust in its successful outcome he developed a calm determination, for which there were no insurmountable obstacles.

However, there was one huge difficulty which stood in the way of founding the mission house in Germany: it was the time of the already mentioned Kulturkampf in Germany. We must keep in

mind that Germany in those days was one nation made up of different states which had their own governments to rule them. The most powerful state within this nation was the State of Prussia. Prussia was ruled by a king who at the same time was the Emperor / Kaiser of the whole German nation. At that time he was Emperor Wilhelm II (after whom the highest mountain of PNG is called Mt. Wilhelm). The Prime Minister or Chancellor (as the Germans say) of Prussia and at the same time of the whole German nation was Otto von Bismarck (Bismarck Archipelago in East New Britain!). The majority of the population of Prussia was Protestant and so were the Emperor and Bismarck.

Bismarck got the Prussian Parliament to issue laws which went very much against the Catholic Church. Some of these laws became binding for the whole of the German nation. There was for instance a law which expelled the Jesuits and similar religious orders from Germany (like the Holy Spirit missionaries, CSSp, who now also work in PNG). Nobody was allowed to start a new religious order. Another law determined that priests could not be put in charge of a parish unless the government had approved their appointment. The appointment by the Bishop was not sufficient. There were still other laws which were directed against the Catholic Church. Anybody who would go against those laws would be severely punished, even with prison. The Bishops opposed these laws and so some of them were imprisoned and even deposed; yet they were not the only ones who had to suffer, but ordinary priests and outspoken lay people as well. It is truly proper to say that the Catholic Church was persecuted by the government. This time of persecution is generally called the “Kulturkampf” or “Cultural War”.

Since it was forbidden to start new religious orders in Germany, Arnold Janssen was unable to start his mission house there. So he looked to the Netherlands where already many German religious orders had found refuge in the Diocese of Roermond. Historically, the Diocese of Roermond had always had close ties with Germany. For several hundred years the diocese extended to towns which today belong to Germany (like the famous town of Kevelaer; it is famous because of its chapel with a picture of Mary to which every year thousands of Catholics from Germany and the Netherlands make pilgrimages. Arnold Janssen used to go there frequently, since it was very close to his home town of Goch.)

Arnold Janssen found a house and a piece of land in the little village of STEYL near the towns of Tegelen and Venlo (today Steyl is politically part of the city of Venlo). On August 4th, 1875 he bought both the house and the land. Both were situated next to the river Maas. The house was not a family house, but an inn. Until a few years before Arnold Janssen came to Steyl, Steyl had been an important trading place. Up to 20 small ships a day would anchor at the Steyl wharf. Traders from neighbouring Germany would come and get the goods from those ships to bring them to Germany and sell them there. They would stay in that inn, waiting for the ships to come or simply to rest a little or get a meal. But then trains were invented and carried all the goods. So ships did not come any more to Steyl to discharge goods there and that little inn lost all its customers. So when Arnold Janssen searched for a house, the owner of the inn readily sold his house together with the land to Arnold Janssen.

On September 8th, 1875 the new mission house was solemnly blessed and opened and the old inn became the new and first German – Austrian – Dutch mission house St. Michael, recruiting and training Germans, Austrians and Dutch men to become overseas missionaries.

Steyl was the first mission house which Arnold Janssen founded. In 1888 a house of studies followed in Rome and in 1889 he founded a third mission house in Austria, near the capital Vienna. In order to start that mission house he was faced with a difficulty of a very different kind than when he had planned to start the first mission house. Since it was to be a Higher Education institution, that means a College in which Philosophy and Theology were to be taught, the Austrian Government insisted that only an Austrian citizen could start such an educational institution. Arnold Janssen saw two possibilities to solve that problem: either he would recall Fr. Josef Freinademetz from China, since he was an Austrian citizen, or he himself would become an Austrian citizen; and that he did. Near Vienna the little village of Goggendorf accepted Arnold Janssen as a member of its community, and so he was able to become an Austrian citizen. For that he had to give up his Prussian or German citizenship. Once he had done that he was able to start the new mission house which he dedicated to the archangel St. Gabriel.

As much as Arnold Janssen knew himself in the service of the overseas mission work, he did not forget to care for the Catholics in Europe. Therefore he allowed all the mission houses to welcome lay men and women or diocesan priests for retreats. From 1877 to January 1909 when Arnold Janssen died, about 65 000 men and women had come to Steyl alone to make their retreats there, that means almost 3000 a year!

To the care of Catholics in the German speaking countries of Europe were dedicated also the magazines which he published: first the “Kleiner Herz-Jesu-Bote” (that is the “Little Messenger of the Sacred Heart of Jesus”) and then “Die Holy Stadt Gottes” (that is “The Holy City of God”). According to Arnold Janssen’s plan, this latter magazine should publish sound stories and interesting novels, high quality engravings and drawings illustrating daily life as well as daily and war events, in short, something of that colourful variety which seems suitable to fill a bit of leisure time in a pleasant and instructive way,” as he himself wrote. It was to serve the dissemination of beneficial knowledge, in particular knowledge from that awe-inspiring “temple of God which is nature” into which God placed us so that it would proclaim to us God’s existence, His greatness and all his illustrious qualities. Last but not least this magazine was to give religious knowledge. In short, this magazine was to give solid general knowledge and formation to the Catholic family.

Arnold Janssen died in Steyl on January 15th, 1909. By that time and under his guidance, from those tiny beginnings in Steyl three missionary congregations had developed which worked in 14 countries of Europe, Asia, Oceania, Latin America and the USA. They were the Society of the Divine Word, in Latin Societas Verbi Divini – short SVD, the Congregation of the Sister Servants of the Holy Spirit, in Latin Congregatio Servarum Spiritus Sancti – in short SSpS, and the Congregation of the Sister Servants of the Holy Spirit of Perpetual Adoration, in Latin Congregatio Servarum Spiritus Sancti de Adoratione Perpetua – in short SSpSAP.

At the time of his death Arnold Janssen was a successful man. However, this success he did not attribute to himself. He knew that he owed all his success to the grace of God for which he was most grateful. On September 8th, 1875, at the blessing of the first mission house in Steyl he had said: “If this house develops into something big and great, we will thank the grace of God.”

Today more than 10 000 male and female missionaries have Steyl as their place of origin. They belong to more than 60 countries and work in 70 countries of our world. Wherever in the world they may be, they honour Arnold Janssen as their “Pater, Dux et Fundator” as we can read on his sarcophagus – the iron coffin which contains his body – in the Lower Church in Steyl, and those three words mean that they honour Arnold Janssen as their “Father, Leader and Founder.” Their common spiritual home is Steyl; there they all have their roots. The soil of Steyl therefore is holy soil to them – since a holy man, a Saint, started there that holy work which they have inherited, and on that soil of Steyl a Saint has found his final earthly resting place.

Already at the time of his death many people were convinced that Arnold Janssen was a Saint.

Upon the news of Arnold Janssen’s death hundreds of condolence telegrams and letters were received in Steyl. They all pointed out the same character qualities of the founder: simplicity, humility, a spirit of hard work, trust in God, piety and then those great achievements for the missions with the visible blessing from God.

People from the neighbouring villages and monasteries and convents came to see his corpse for a last time. He was a holy man, many said.

One of Arnold Janssen’s close friends, the Franciscan Friar and Bishop Döbbing of the Italian Diocese of Nepri-Sutri gave a very practical advice to Arnold Janssen’s spiritual sons and daughters. He expressed his hope that Janssen one day would be declared a Saint and he added: *“Therefore it is only right, to start early to collect everything that is related to this blessed man.”*

It was a wise advice the bishop gave. For all those things were needed once the procedures began which led to Arnold Janssen’s beatification in 1975 and which led to his canonization on October 5th, 2003.

## **Josef Freinademetz –**

*“I came to set the earth on fire, and how I wish it were already kindled” (Lk 12:49)*

Josef Freinademetz was born on April 25th, 1852 in the tiny hamlet of Oies in the Gadervalley of the South Tirol Alps. His parents were Johann Matthias and Anna Maria Freinademetz. He was the fourth of 13 children of which four died at a very early age. The hamlet of Oies belonged to the parish of Abtei in the then Diocese of Brixen (today Diocese of Bozen-Brixen). Freinademetz belonged to a very special group of people, the Ladinians who have their own Ladinian language. At the time of his birth South Tirol was part of Austria and therefore Freinademetz was an Austrian citizen. He was very gifted in learning languages: he spoke Ladinian, Italian, German, Latin, French and in China he learned two Chinese languages.

Freinademetz’s father was a farmer; to look after a farm in the Alps meant hard, very hard work. That hard work never prevented the Freinademetz family from setting time apart for prayer. Prayer and work just belonged together. During winter time father Johann Matthias Freinademetz went to Mass every day, during summer time he was not always able to attend

Mass daily, but he tried to do it as often as possible. In order to get to church he had to walk for about 30 minutes.

His primary school Josef Freinademetz did in Abtei; and there the language of instruction was Ladinian. His high school he did in the big town of Brixen; there the language of instruction was German which he had to learn first before he could attend high school.

After completing high school he joined the Major Seminary in order to become a Diocesan priest and a year before he had finished his studies, he was ordained priest on July 25th, 1875, by the Bishop of Brixen, Bishop Gasser.

From 1876 on he was Assistant Priest in the parish St. Martin in Turn, close to home.

Freinademetz was ordained priest for service in the Diocese of Brixen. However, from his high school days on he also wanted to become a missionary.

Once he heard in a sermon this Bible verse from the OT book of Lamentations quoted:

“Children are begging for food that no one will give them” (Lamentations 4:4). When he heard those words again during Holy Week, he was struck by them and he told a friend: “Did you hear what Jeremiah is lamenting about? The children beg for food. Those are the poor pagan children. They beg for the food of truth; however, there are only very few messengers of the faith, very few missionaries. If only I could become such a messenger, a missionary!”

At that time there was no place yet to train German speaking missionaries where he could have fulfilled his wish. So he decided to pray first for the grace of the missionary vocation.

He felt that his prayers were heard when in January 1878 he read an article in the Diocesan newspaper about the newly founded mission house in Steyl. With permission of his Bishop, on February 28th, 1878, he wrote to Arnold Janssen in Steyl applying for admission to the mission house in order to become a missionary. Two weeks later he received the acceptance letter from Arnold Janssen. On August 27th, 1878, Freinademetz finally arrived in Steyl to begin his life as a missionary.

Together with the young Bavarian priest Johann Baptist Anzer he got the mission appointment for China, but it should still take until March 3rd, 1879, that the two were able to leave Steyl and begin their journey to China. Freinademetz first went home to say good bye to his parents and relatives and friends, then he went on to Rome and from there to Ancona where he and Anzer set out for China on March 15th, 1879. Being on the ship he suddenly felt homesick and what he thought he described with these words: “We are not any more on European soil. Strange thoughts cross my mind: I have to leave home, friends, parents! At home I had already built for myself a good and happy life. In my first years of my priestly life I saw only roses blossoming for me: a circle of well meaning people and friends surrounded me. And now I was to be pulled out of all that; in a different world I should begin to search for new friends, to learn new languages, in short, to start all over again. What have you done? – Yet: What do you want to do? You want to save souls for heaven! And my wounded heart was healed.”

On April 20, the ship arrived in Hongkong. Two students from the local Major Seminary were waiting for them. Freinademetz describes his feelings: “Silently praying the Te Deum, our hearts beating with excitement, that is how we made our way through the crowded streets of that big oriental city to the Bishop’s residence. We had reached the end of our journey. Praised be the Lord for everything.”

To a friend at home in Abtei he wrote just before the end of the journey, still on the ship: ‘I would have to tell you a lot.... The conclusion I have arrived at is this: just don’t let us care all that much about this evil world, let us rather seek to make daily progress in the true science... in the love for the sacred heart, especially through being one with him in his suffering’.

And there should be suffering, a lot of suffering.

When Freinademetz and Anzer came ashore in Hongkong, China was full of tensions, and the missionaries and their new Chinese Christians became victims of those tensions.

The Chinese are proud of their culture and religion. Several hundred years before Freinademetz and Anzer had entered China there had been Catholic Missionaries there. The Jesuit missionaries Matteo Ricci and Johann Adam Schall von Bell and others like them were very much liked by the Chinese Emperor and the educated people, for they were first class scientists. Their way of inculturating the Christian faith into the Chinese way of life was highly appreciated and quite a number of people became Christians. However, the Vatican Congregation of the Propagation of the Faith forbade their way of doing missionary work through adaptation to the people’s customs and beliefs. Catholic Chinese were not allowed to venerate the ancestors or to participate in the cult of Confucius. The Chinese emperor interpreted that decision of the Vatican as an insult of the Chinese people and their ancestors, and he in turn forbade any missionary activity, and all missionaries were expelled.

During the 19th century the European countries led wars against China; first the English fought the Chinese; the English wanted to import Opium into China in order to pay with Opium for the tea which they exported from China – something the Chinese refused. So it came to the Opium war which lasted from 1840-1842 and in which the Chinese were defeated. From 1856-1860 there was a second war in which the English were joined by the French and again the Chinese were defeated. They were then forced to pay war compensation to England and France, to accept trade with opium as a foreign medicine, to open a number of their harbours for trade with Europe and to permit missionary work in the interior of China.

The Chinese felt humiliated and hated all the foreigners, missionaries included. Any foreigner was considered a “foreign devil”. Furthermore, the non-Christian Chinese could not understand that the Chinese Christians were forbidden to take part in the official veneration or cult of the ancestors and Confucius, and that was a further reason that the missionaries were hated.

Those Chinese who became Christians had to experience that hate as well and even more than the missionaries. Many of them lost their house, their belongings and even their lives.

Such was the situation in China when Josef Freinademetz and Johann Baptist Anzer arrived there as the first Missionaries of the newly founded mission house in Steyl, and this situation overshadowed their whole life and work in China.

For two years Anzer and Freinademetz remained with Bishop Raimondi in the Apostolic Vicariate of Hongkong. While Anzer was teaching in the Seminary, Freinademetz spent those two years in a rural parish. He was like a missionary ‘apprentice’. He learned the local language and changed his looks: from now on he wore only Chinese clothes and had his head shaved, with the exception of a few hair at the back of his head to which was tightened a plait; later he had one made of his own hair.

However, that outward change did not mean an inner change and adaptation to the Chinese people and their customs and beliefs. Before Freinademetz made that adaptation he first went through a culture shock. His idea of mission work had been completely different and so he was deeply disappointed and discouraged by the reality and that in turn made him look in a negative way at the Chinese and everything Chinese. If the missionaries had no higher motives, so he said, they would take the next ship and return to Europe.

Luckily, Freinademetz was able to overcome his culture shock and- in so far as that is possible – he became a Chinese to the Chinese.

In 1881 Anzer and Freinademetz finished their missionary ‘apprenticeship’. Back in Rome Arnold Janssen had been able to secure for his missionaries their own mission territory. The Franciscans who looked after Shantung gave South - Shantung to the missionaries from Steyl. Anzer was appointed ecclesiastical Superior of this mission; after some years South -Shantung was elevated to the rank of an Apostolic Vicariate and Anzer became its first Bishop and Vicar Apostolic.

In March 1882 Freinademetz arrived in South - Shantung. Until his death in 1908 he was to give a variety of services to the people and the church in South - Shantung as well as his missionary order, the Society of the Divine Word: he was a “wandering” missionary who moved from place to place, founding new Christian communities and strengthening the old ones in their faith; every time his bishop went overseas, he was the administrator of the Apostolic Vicariate; he was Provincial Superior of the Society of the Divine Word; in that latter position he represented the Superior General, Arnold Janssen, in China and therefore he was his closest co-worker there. Suffering was part of his missionary work: there were, for instance, hostile attacks on his life by those who hated all foreigners or there was the disappointment about people whom he had trusted and who had betrayed his trust; in spite of that his love for the Chinese people grew and he said: “Also in heaven I don’t want to be anything but a Chinese.”

In loving China and the Chinese he did not forget his home area of Tirol and his country Austria. He kept up a keen interest in all the church and political events back home. In his last years of life it gave him great joy to be able to send a congratulatory message to the Austrian Emperor’s envoy in Peking at the occasion of the Emperor’s birthday.

The first biography about Josef Freinademetz was written by Bishop Augustinus Henninghaus SVD. First, he had been a fellow missionary of Freinademetz, then his subject and then his superior once he had become bishop. When Henninghaus was ordained bishop something beautiful happened to Freinademetz. Ordinarily there are three bishops who ordain a new bishop; however, one of those three who was to be co-consecrator of Bishop Henninghaus had suddenly fallen ill and no other bishop could be found to attend the ordination. So Fr. Freinademetz was asked to function as co-consecrator on behalf of the sick Bishop, and he placed his hands on the new Bishop.

Because of their close connection no one knew Freinademetz as well as Bishop Henninghaus; and therefore his characterisation of Freinademetz is particularly valuable. Bishop Henninghaus writes:

‘He had a good grasp of things, a faithful memory and a real talent for learning languages’. (His Chinese was impeccable, a Chinese said.)

‘To save souls, to lead them to the true faith, to a genuine Christian life, to sacrifice himself completely, not to be afraid of hard work, in short to be a missionary with heart and soul, that was his ideal. That is what it meant for him to be a priest.’

Missionaries looked upon the Bishop as a father and Freinademetz as a mother of the mission. Bishop Henninghaus comments: ‘A mother’ in his mild, soul touching influence, in the loving care for the true, religious well being of each individual, that he was and that he became more and more for the whole mission, and in that way, more than through anything else he did, he became a blessing for South - Shantung’.

Looking back at the outward development of the mission, Bishop Henninghaus describes Freinademetz’s contribution:

‘We know how miserable the beginnings were that ... Bishop Anzer and Fr. Freinademetz found when they came to South - Shantung. How tremendously this mission grew in the 26 years that Fr. Freinademetz worked here....!’

Where in earlier times even the name of the Christian, Catholic religion was completely unknown, there are now more than 1000 villages where houses are dedicated to religious service, where a bell rings and calls for prayer and where the sign of the cross is seen all over. Whereas in earlier times missionaries were in an insulting manner driven out of all the towns, in the meantime it had been possible to start a mission station almost everywhere, and there were no more districts in which the Catholic name had not been made known in some way or other.’

‘Fr. Freinademetz saw all this develop. It wasn’t only his work. However, in one way or the other he had participated in it. In some places he had laid the foundation himself and in any case, he had done his best to deepen and sanctify all the activities of the mission. Like Moses on the mountain, during long hours of prayer he had stood over his people protecting and blessing them, in all their labours and in the dangers they faced he had always gone ahead of them ready for sacrifice and undauntedly. Particularly this vivid example showed what and how a good

missionary should be. And that makes his life so meaningful for South – Shantung and perhaps for others as well.’

On January 28th, 1908. Josef Freinademetz died in his residence as Provincial Superior, Taikia, of typhoid. At that time, beside being Provincial Superior, he was also once again the Administrator of the Vicariate Apostolic since Bishop Henninghaus was in Germany.

Immediately after his death the following message was sent to Superior General Arnold Janssen in Steyl:

‘A short while ago, at 18 hours our good Acting Apostolic Vicar died of typhoid. ... In his sickness he gave us a heroic example of patience. He did not like to die, but he surrendered himself to God’s holy will’.

Arnold Janssen replied:

The Lord God has taken away from us ‘this second founder of the mission, this good and holy soul, who gained so great and immortal merits in his work for South Shantung.’ ‘We therefore may hope that his heavenly crown was prepared for him and that the Lord has called him, to give to his faithful servant the well-earned rest and a beautiful place in his sublime kingdom. The more zealous, the more selfless, the more self-sacrificial he worked, the more he will now be filled with joy, but he will also be our intercessor at the heavenly throne.’

A Chinese Christian said: *‘I feel like having lost my father and mother.’*

A Holy Spirit Missionary Sister in China wrote:

*‘Already now we would like to venerate our highly revered Fr. Superior Freinademetz as a Saint ...The only consolation for us poor orphans now is that we have an exceptionally good intercessor; the future will prove that.’*

Well, time has proven it: On October 5th, 2003 Josef. Freinademetz was given to the whole world as a Saint.

## **Daniel Comboni –**

### *Africans must be missionaries to Africans*

On October 5th, 2003, a third great missionary was canonized: Daniel Comboni. He and Arnold Janssen knew each other personally and Comboni visited Janssen in Steyl. In his mission magazine, Der Kleine Herz-Jesu-Bote – the Little Messenger of the Sacred Heart of Jesus – Janssen frequently reported about Comboni and his work and most of what is now said about Comboni is taken from those articles; it is actually now Janssen talking about Comboni.

Daniel Comboni was born on March 15th, 1831 in Limone, Italy. He joined the Mazza Mission Institute which had been founded by the Italian priest Don Mazza. 1854 he was ordained a priest.

The Mazza Mission Institute sent its missionaries to the Apostolic Vicariate of Central Africa which had been founded in 1846. Many of the missionaries got sick and died. Comboni went to the Sudan in 1858. But a year later he had to return to Italy because of sickness. The loss of so many missionary lives led to a halt in the missionary activity in Central Africa. Comboni, however, never gave up his wish to work as a missionary in Africa.

In Rome, in 1864 Margaretha Maria Alacoque was beatified who was a great admirer of the Sacred Heart and to whom Jesus had appeared and given the task of spreading the veneration of his Sacred Heart. Comboni was present at the beatification ceremony and during that ceremony he felt a mighty urge to work for the Christianisation of Africa. He also became aware of the plan according to which missionary work should proceed. It was a two – point plan:

1. In Africa houses should be built for Europeans and indigenous Africans in which indigenous African missionaries should be trained to be missionaries for their own people. Africans must be missionaries to Africans!
2. In Europe colleges should be founded which would train the personnel to run the training places in Africa.

From then on Comboni looked for support for his plan. However, hardly anybody seemed to be interested in it due to the loss of many missionary lives earlier on.

Therefore, on June 1st, 1867, Comboni founded the Institute for the Mission in Nigrizia, as he called Africa. It was to be a community of priests and lay brothers who dedicated themselves to the evangelisation of Africa, that means they were to train indigenous Africans to become missionaries to their own people. The centre of this community was and is Verona in Italy; today this community is called ‘Comboni missionaries of the Sacred Heart of Jesus’, in Latin *Missionarii Comboni Cordis Jesu*, in short MCCJ.

During the first Vatican Council Comboni wrote a petition on behalf of the missionary work in Africa and asked the bishops gathered for the Council to sign and support it. In a short and compelling form he requested the Council to take effective measures for the conversion of Africa.

Comboni tirelessly travelled throughout Europe to win support for the mission in Africa. He found such support in Cologne in Germany where there already was an association which had as its goal the support of the mission in Africa and it gave him generous financial aid. In South Tirol, Bavaria, Belgium and England he found support as well.

On January 1st, 1872 Comboni founded a congregation of missionary sisters; they also have their center in Verona. The main task of these sisters was to train African women to evangelise Africa.

In 1872 the Vatican Congregation for the Propagation of Faith was prepared to give new life to the Apostolic Vicariate of Central Africa and entrusted it to Comboni's congregation; he himself was appointed head of the mission. Comboni chose the town of Khatoum in Sudan as the centre of his missionary activities.

In that mission area entrusted to Comboni the slave trade flourished. Whenever Comboni met slaves he got them released and gave them the chance to settle on a piece of land which he had bought. So the former slaves could support themselves.

In 1877 Comboni was appointed Vicar Apostolic for Central Africa. On August 15th, 1877 he was ordained Bishop in Rome. On November 5th and 6th of that year he visited Arnold Janssen in Steyl. It was during this visit that he encouraged Arnold Janssen to start a congregation of missionary sisters – which he eventually did, as we know.

The kind of man Comboni was we get to know from some of his own sayings. Once he wrote a letter thanking that Cologne association which supported him financially. Towards the end of that letter he wrote:

‘As for me and my missionaries, you may know, that with great joy in our hearts we dedicate our lives to the well-being of this part of the world which is still almost unknown and where there is so much misery, in order to win it for Jesus Christ. Our sole program, which we want to carry out with the help of God and with all the means of human prudence and wisdom, is: Either the Africans or death. Aut Nigritia aut mors.’

When he arrived in Khartoum to take up his work as newly appointed head of the Apostolic Vicariate of Central Africa, he told the people there:

‘I return to you to belong to you always and to dedicate myself forever to work for your best.

Day and night, cold and rain will find me always ready to be of service to your spiritual needs. Rich and poor, Master and slave will always have equal access to my heart. Your well – being will be mine as well, and your sufferings will be mine also. I want to have everything in common with everyone of you, and the happiest day of my life will be the one when I will be able to give my life for you.’

During his visit to Steyl Comboni told stories from his life. Arnold Janssen writes:

‘How deeply touching were his stories about the difficulties which he had encountered, about the misjudgements, the slander and the unjust accusations which he had to suffer and likewise about the mistrust which he had encountered on his thorny way. Because of that his work will be built on a much stronger foundation.’ And then, at the end Msgr. Comboni added:

*‘Sed confidete, cornua Christi sunt fortiori quam cornua diaboli, that means, Be confident, the horns of Christ are much stronger than the horns of the devil.’*

Daniel Comboni died on October 10th, 1881, in Khartoum / Sudan.

In the June issue of his *Kleiner Herz-Jesu-Bote* (Little Messenger of the Sacred Heart of Jesus) Arnold Janssen introduced Daniel Comboni to his readers with these almost prophetic words:

*‘The time has come to say something about this missionary whose name probably will one day still be mentioned with honour when many of those others will be forgotten who now boast with their discoveries in Africa.’*

How right Arnold Janssen was. On October 5th, 2003, Daniel Comboni’s name was called with honour, when Pope John Paul II wrote his name into the Book of the Saints and elevated him to the honour of the altars.

## **Arnold Janssen – Josef Freinademetz – Daniel Comboni Three Soul-Mates**

Arnold Janssen, Josef Freinademetz and Daniel Comboni was canonized on the same day, that is October 5th, 2003; so these three men have had the day of their canonization in common. However, they have more in common than just the day of their canonization, as we will see shortly.

All three come from simple, deeply pious families.

All three were born in the 19th century, and that was a very special century.

It was a century which saw great technical innovations and political changes.

It was a century during which the church was hated and persecuted in several parts of the world and during which the church proved the strength of her faith in many different ways, not at least through a new flourishing of missionary activity to which all three contributed their share.

It was the century of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and the three of them were filled with a great love for the Heart of Jesus and with an equally great love for the missionary work of the church. Their love for the Sacred Heart enabled them to become Apostles of the Sacred Heart and to sacrifice their lives for the realisation of the wishes of the Sacred Heart within the missionary work of the church. Like Jesus, so they accepted humiliation and ridicule out of love for the people to whom they knew themselves sent.

The three of them expressed their love of the Sacred Heart in similar ways: Arnold Janssen had the motto: *Vivat cor Jesu in cordibus hominum* – May the Sacred Heart of Jesus live in the hearts of all people.

Josef Freinademetz and Daniel Comboni used to conclude their letters with words like: ‘In Sanctissimo Corde’ oder ‘In Sanctissimo Corde Jesu’ – ‘in the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, yours...’

Filled with the love of the Sacred Heart Josef Freinademetz and Daniel Comboni were ready to literally give up their lives in the service of the people entrusted to them.

In the beginning of the Boxer Revolution in China Freinademetz as leader of the Mission was told by Chinese government officials and by German Colonial officers to leave the mission together with all of his missionaries and to find refuge in a secure place. Freinademetz did not want to do that; how could he as leader of the mission leave his people alone? He was determined to stay. He told his fellow – missionaries: “You go! You are still young and strong and can still work for the missions for many years to come. I am already half-dead. Who cares, if I die? Why shouldn't I sacrifice myself?” And he did not leave, but remained with his Christians. When Arnold Janssen heard about this he later wrote to Freinademetz:

‘You stood up to the danger of an almost certain death and you threw yourself, so to speak, into the lion's mouth in order to remain to the end with your troubled children. .. You must have certainly believed that it was the will of God for you to stay and you must have felt an extraordinary urge of the Holy Spirit which enabled you to do so. I like to join you in that belief. And therefore I congratulate you from the bottom of my heart for what you did.’

Bishop Comboni was of a similar mind. Once he said:

‘The cross is the royal way leading to triumph. The Sacred Heart beat also for the Africans. The true Apostle never ever gives way to the most difficult obstacles, the fiercest objections and standing firm faces up to all kinds of difficulties and the impact of the most furious storms; he walks on the way of martyrdom to triumph.’

These words Arnold Janssen reported in his magazine, the *Kleiner Herz-Jesu-Bote* (the Little Messenger of the Sacred Heart of Jesus) and from that we may conclude that he agreed with them.

All what has been said so far tells us: Arnold Janssen, Joseph Freinademetz and Daniel Comboni were of the same mind and heart, they were ‘soul-mates’.

Looking at the lives of these three men we see that they were connected in a wonderful way.

Long time before they knew of each other, one and the same priest made an impact on the lives of Arnold Janssen and Josef Freinademetz, and that priest was Fr. Malfatti S.J, the director of the ‘Apostolate of Prayer in union with the Sacred Heart of Jesus’ for Germany and Austria-Hungary. Upon his suggestion Arnold Janssen accepted the work of director of that Apostolate of Prayer for the diocese of Münster. This very same Fr. Malfatti went every year to Brixen to preach the annual retreat to the seminarians there, and Freinademetz was one of them. It is likely that Fr. Malfatti gave those retreats in the spirit of the Apostolate of Prayer – and so the lives of Arnold Janssen and Josef Freinademetz were - through Fr. Malfatti - touched by the spirit of the Apostolate of Prayer and that contributed to them being ‘soul-mates’.

Arnold Janssen and Daniel Comboni met each other in person. It can be assumed that while living in Brixen Freinademetz may at least have heard of Comboni, and perhaps he may have seen him as well. For one of Freinademetz's teachers, the priest Dr. Chrysostomus Mittertutzner,

had supported the mission in Central Africa since 1850, and when Comboni and his priests and brothers took over that mission, he was one of Comboni's great supporters. Since Comboni travelled a lot to visit his supporters, it is quite likely that he visited Brixen as well.

Arnold Janssen's acquaintance with Comboni goes back to his years in Bocholt. At that time he collected quite a bit of money for Comboni who in turn wrote to him frequently, and so gradually a friendship developed between these two men who shared so many ideas and ideals. Proof of that are the numerous articles about Comboni which Arnold Janssen published in the *Kleiner Herz-Jesu-Bote* (Little Messenger of the Sacred Heart of Jesus) from 1877 onwards and even after Comboni's death (from March to December 1883 he published one article on Comboni in every issue of his magazine).

Unforgettable for Janssen was Comboni's visit to Steyl on November 5 and 6, 1877. The bishop was surprised how much Steyl had developed in such a short time and he said to Arnold Janssen in Latin:

*“Non parvam vel mediocrem, sed permagnam benedictionem Dei tu habuisti, crede mihi, scio de hac re.”* That means: “You haven't had a small or mediocre, but a very great blessing from God; you can believe me that, I know about that.”

As already said, this visit was unforgettable for Arnold Janssen, and after Comboni's death Janssen wrote in the *Kleiner Herz-Jesu-Bote* (Little Messenger of the Sacred Heart of Jesus):

‘The writer of these lines will never forget the impression which the personality of Comboni made on him. The fire of enthusiasm which radiated like lightning from the eyes of this apostolic man, the words which flowed so eloquently from his lips, when he started to speak about the grand work of the propagation of faith. All of that showed, what enthusiasm for the holy faith and what energy lived in him. To these inner qualities came his impressive, strong build; indeed, Msgr. Comboni was inch by inch a missionary, a bishop, an Apostle.

Comboni appreciated Arnold Janssen as well. A sign of that is that he concluded some of his letters to him with words like “*Tuissimus Daniel Comboni*”. ‘*Tuissimus*’ is the superlative of ‘*tuus*’, which means ‘yours’.

Arnold Janssen admired in Daniel Comboni his – as he himself said – very simple, modest nature and his wonderfully fiery spirit.

A simple modest nature and a wonderfully fiery spirit was common to all three of these Blessed and Holy men. Their heart was filled with the love of the Sacred Heart of Jesus to all peoples and races, and they were one in the wish: *‘Vivat Cor Jesu in Cordibus Hominum’* – *May the Sacred Heart of Jesus live in the hearts of all people!*

For that they sacrificed their lives: Daniel Comboni died of a tropical fever aged 50 and Josef Freinademetz died of typhoid aged 56.

How great is God's providence that these three 'soul-mates' who were canonized together on October 5, 2003.

Arnold Janssen, Josef Freinademetz and Daniel Comboni,

Pray for Us!