

Mission Office, Catholic Diocese of St. Cloud

January 2017

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January Days Invite Us to Encounter

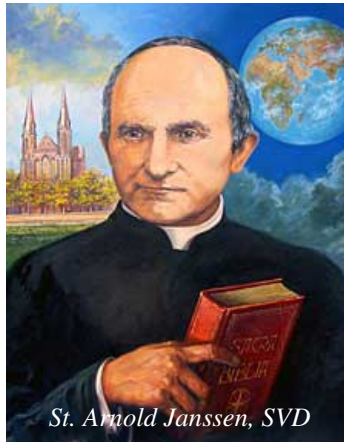
January 15th is the feast day of St. Arnold Janssen, SVD. St. Arnold is the founder of multiple religious congregations—particularly the Society of the Divine Word, a missionary congregation of men, and the Missionary Sisters Servants of the Holy Spirit (or Holy Spirit Missionary Sisters as they're more commonly known), a women's community. Begun in 1875 and 1889 respectively, these congregations out of Europe invited men and women to give up their families, homelands, property, and in some cases their lives, to serve the poor in other parts of the world. Today the Divine Word community has over 6,000 fathers and brothers, making it the largest missionary congregation in the Catholic Church. The Sisters have more than 4,000 members in 49 countries around the world. Both of these congregations have welcomed parishioners from the St. Cloud Diocese over the years, including one man who is still active in mission in Ghana, West Africa today.

This year St. Arnold's feast comes right on the heels of National Migration week, the week designated by the US Catholic Bishops as a time of prayer, learning and action on behalf of our brothers and sisters who have for various reasons had to leave their homes and make a life elsewhere. While the circumstances are clearly different, and I don't mean to compare the trials of current migrants and refugees, nor those of early missionaries, I am nonetheless struck by a common thread—leaving homelands.

St. Arnold and his co-founders left behind all they knew, except the love and mercy of their God, to serve the poor, help others know that love and mercy as well, and to encounter God in the new communities they would journey to. Through their sacrifices, they found God in

new ways and places, and found the true meaning of Christ's compassionate love! Today the poor that St. Arnold and those who have followed him left their homes to serve are often those who, like them, have journeyed far from home and sacrificed familiarity, comfort, community and so much more in hopes of encountering the love and compassion of God elsewhere. Though those who leave homelands today are often not doing so out of choice, their sacrifices are often out of a similar trust in God. Both the servants and those being served put their trust in the same as they leave some of the same things in hope of finding the same result—an encounter with God in others.

St. Arnold Janssen's feast day falls directly in between the close of National Migration Week and the Martin Luther King, Jr. holiday. Again, I am struck by a common thread. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., though not leaving behind homeland, did give up comfort in order to fight for justice, gave up reputation in order to serve others, and ultimately gave up his life in order to help us all recognize our call to encounter God in others—in ALL others!



St. Arnold Janssen, SVD

Regardless of culture, regardless of homeland, regardless of race, regardless of history, we all share the same story—like the Divine Word and Holy Spirit Missionaries, like Dr. King, like so many of our brothers and sisters today—ours is a story of a God whose love and compassion exceeds boundaries; ours is a story of being asked to venture in trust to meet Christ in the other.

May these January saints and special days serve as reminders, and invite us into new ways of being both the servant and those who are served as we sacrifice ourselves in order to be open to new encounters!

Words of Wisdom: "Since love completes all, makes hard things soft, and the difficult easy, let us strive to make all our acts proceed from love." (St. Arnold Janssen, SVD)



Give it a Try!

Try incorporating these resources, projects or activities into your ministry.



Mission Education Resources & Ideas:



January is *Poverty in the US Awareness Month*. Check out the educational resources (English and Spanish) sponsored by the US Bishops' Catholic Campaign for Human Development at www.povertyusa.org and www.pobrezausa.org. Watch the Poverty USA tour and Stories of Hope, and more!

Try a new focus for *Catholic Schools Week* this year: Catholic schools are called to uphold the dignity of all, to serve others, and to form disciples who live



out the Gospel values. In an effort to help schools answer this call, the National Catholic Educational Association (NCEA) and Catholic Relief Services (CRS) have partnered to create a FREE "Syrian Refugee Toolkit" that encourages prayer, learning, acting and giving in solidarity with those in greatest need in our world during Catholic Schools Week 2017. Take a look at: <http://ghs.crs.org/content/little-flower-project>.

And it's never too early to start planning for *Rice Bowl* in your community. Be sure to check out their website for free resources: www.crsricebowl.org. Or contact the Mission Office for help setting up something special in your school or parish this year!

Don't Forget:



Jan 8th to 14th: National Migration Week

Jan 15th: St. Arnold Janssen's feast day

Jan 16th: Martin Luther King, Jr. Day

Jan 18th to 25th: Week of Prayer for Christian Unity

Jan 29th to Feb 4th: Catholic Schools Week

Feb 8th: International Day of Prayer & Awareness against Human Trafficking