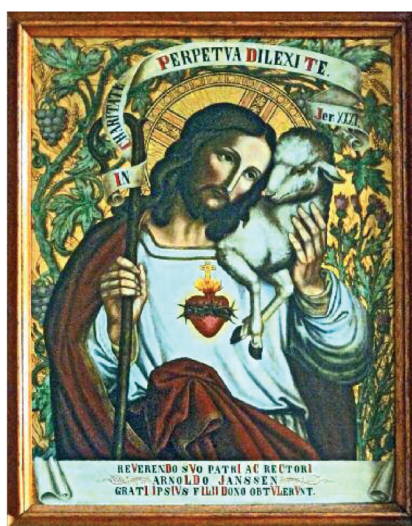


# Bringing and Receiving Love, Light and Joy

## *A Story for Christmas and throughout the Year*

**F**ather Arnold wanted the students of philosophy and theology to form a group of the St. Vincent de Paul Society, which helps the poor. What influenced the Founder to introduce this custom was the consideration that our confreres in the missions would often have to deal with the poor. They should have at least some understanding of the needs of the poorest classes of our society. The Founder also introduced regular conferences for the poor. All the deserving poor families in Steyl and its surrounding were sought out and a list of their names drawn up. Each student was assigned some families. Then the theologians, before their ordination, were sent out two by two during their free time to visit the poor just as our Savior had sent out the apostles. To make larger donations to the poor, such as providing bed linen, clothing or money, the permission of the treasurer or some other official was needed. In particularly serious cases, the Founder himself could be approached for help. Of course, the theologians were expected to look for other benefactors outside their community. They could dispose of freely whatever the benefactors gave them. Once a month all those involved in helping the poor had to attend a conference at which the Founder himself presided whenever possible. Each was obliged to report on his activities, his successes and failures, as well as other experiences

which could be useful for the proper care of the community. The Founder repeatedly reminded the theologians of the purposes of such charitable activity: to observe and understand misery and want; to find new ways of approaching completely strange people for the help they provided. In that way the students learned to bring love, light and joy into their lives. And this would have an effect on them as well: for to bring joy into sad peoples' lives makes you a good person. According to a definition of Fr. Arnold: "That is a good person who knows how to brighten up sad eyes."



Jesus Christ is the face of the Father's mercy. Pope Francis

Encountering the poor we can give but we can also be at the receiving end. What we receive in our encounter with the poor we can share with those we meet when we return. The poor often share special gifts too precious to keep to oneself. The giver of all that is good, God Himself, knows why the poor can be so generous in sharing gifts that one cannot buy. The invitation at Christmas and throughout the year is to experience for oneself love given and received and to enable others to do the same.

In the jubilee year of mercy we can pray as Fr. Arnold prayed to the Sacred Heart: "Give us courage and enthusiasm to spend our lives in the service of your good news of love. Help us to follow you faithfully and to be enthusiastic witnesses of your good news." One might add: not only through words but very simply through our being. May our whole being radiate love and joy. Amen.

A blessed Christmas and peace throughout the New Year!

Heinz Kulüke and Leadership Team

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