The Little Seed of a Big Dream

The Story of Saint Arnold Janssen

Written for brave hearts and kind helpers

An Introduction to the Story

Have you ever held a tiny seed in your hand? It seems so small and quiet. But inside, it holds a secret - a beautiful dream waiting to grow.

This is a story about a boy who had a seed of love planted in his heart. His name was Arnold. He didn't have a magic wand or a superhero's cape. He simply had great faith, a brave heart, and a dream to share God's love with the whole wide world.

You are about to discover how that one small beginning grew into something amazing, reaching across oceans and mountains. It's a story that shows us that with God, even the smallest start can change the world.

So, turn the page, and let's see how a little seed became a great, big forest of kindness. Your own heart is full of seeds, too.
Who knows what wonderful things might grow?

A note for Teachers/Catechists/Parents:

These activities are designed to build a personal bridge between the children and the priests of the St. Peregrine's Partnership, *(Divine Word Missionaries),* fostering a sense of familiarity and community. The ***"Interview a Missionary"*** activity is especially powerful for making the priesthood and the 'missionary order' relatable. You could formally invite one of the fathers to your classroom to answer these questions in person – especially during the month of October – "Missionary Month".

Chapter 1:

A Heart Full of Love

(1837)

Arnold Janssen was born on **November 5, 1837**, in a small, snowy German town called Goch. His home was warm, not just from the fireplace, but from love. His father loved to talk about God's great, big love for everyone in the whole world. Little Arnold would listen, his eyes wide. He imagined this love was like a **bright, glowing seed** waiting to be planted. He didn't know it yet, but that seed was being planted right in his own heart.

Discussion Question: What is something kind your family has taught you? Write it down.

Chapter 2:

The Dreamer

(1861-1873)

Arnold grew up and became a science teacher! He was ordained a priest on **August 15, 1861**. He liked numbers and stars, but he loved people more. He started writing a small newsletter about prayer, called *"The Little Messenger."* Lots of people read it! As he wrote, he had a big dream. He saw a **thought bubble** over his head: a map of the world where people helped each other and shared love. But in Germany, it was hard to start his dream school for missionaries. He needed to be brave.

Activity: Draw Your Dream! Draw a picture of your own "thought bubble." What is a big, kind dream you have for the world? Write it down.

Chapter 3:

The Big, Brave Step

(1875)

So, in **1875**, Father Arnold packed his bags. He packed his clothes, his books, and a whole suitcase full of **Faith**. He took a big, brave step across the border into a new country, the Netherlands.

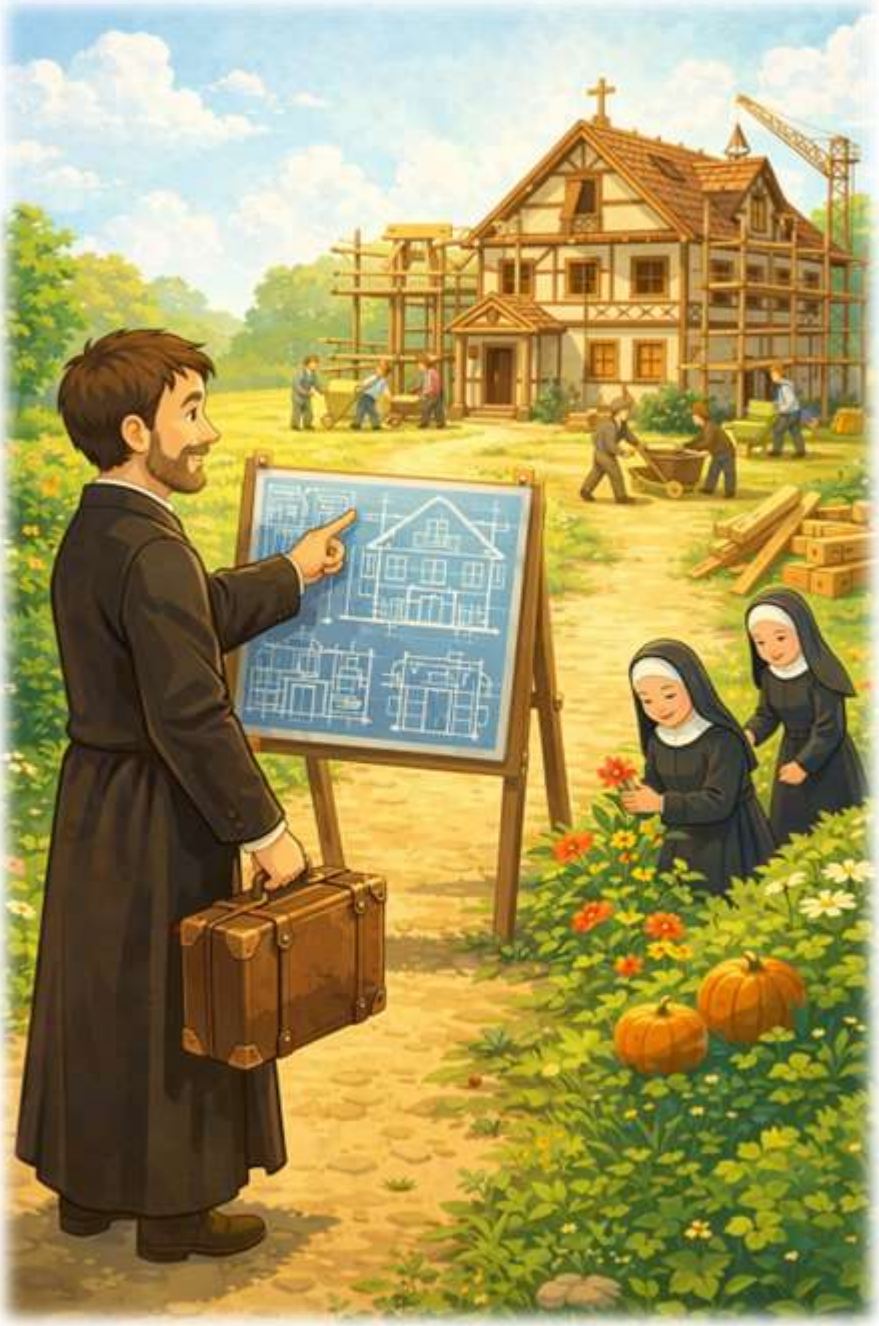
There, in a little town called Steyl, he found a worn-out, old inn that was for sale. It was small and creaky, but Arnold saw its potential. He bought it and named it the **"Mission House."** His dream now had a home!

Map Activity: Find Germany *(where Arnold was from)* and the Netherlands *(where Steyl is)* on a map. Trace the journey he might have taken. How do easy do you think this journey was? Write it down.

Chapter 4:

God's Growing Family

(1878-1896)



Soon, other brave men came to learn and help. The old inn was too small! They had to build more rooms, then new buildings. It was like a busy beehive! Arnold knew God's family included everyone.

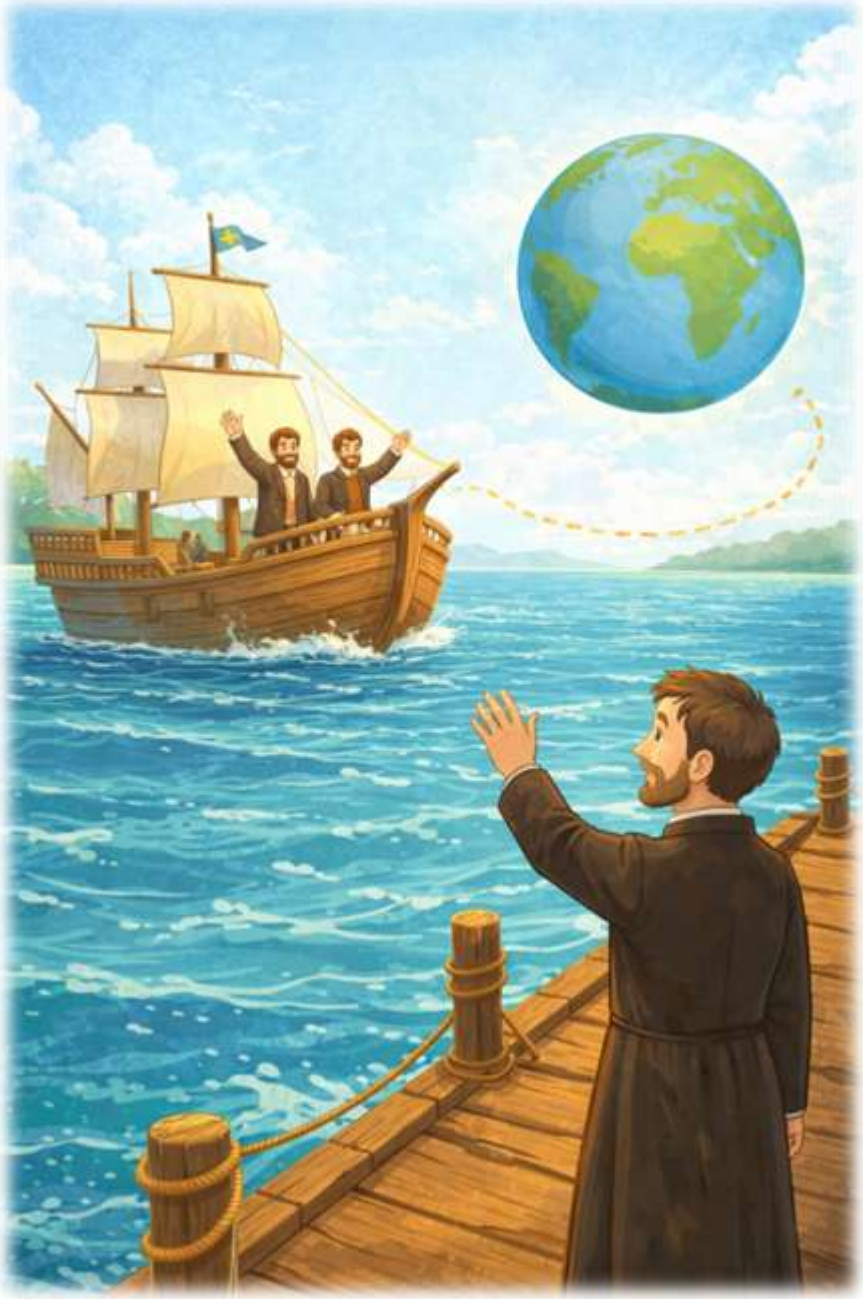
So, he welcomed Brothers in 1878 who were great builders and gardeners. Then, with Mother Maria, he started two groups of Sisters: the Missionary Sisters (1889) and the cloistered "Pink Sisters" who prayed all day (1896). Everyone had a special job in the big family

Activity: Build Your Own "Mission House"! Use cardboard boxes, blocks, or LEGOs. Build a home for your own team of helpers. Who lives there? What do they do? Write it down.

Chapter 5:

Love Travels the World

(1879)



Then, a very exciting day came. It was **1879**. Arnold stood on the dock by the big river and waved goodbye.

The first two missionaries from his house, Father Joseph and Father John, were sailing on a huge ship all the way to **China**! They were going to share the love that started as a tiny seed in Arnold's heart.

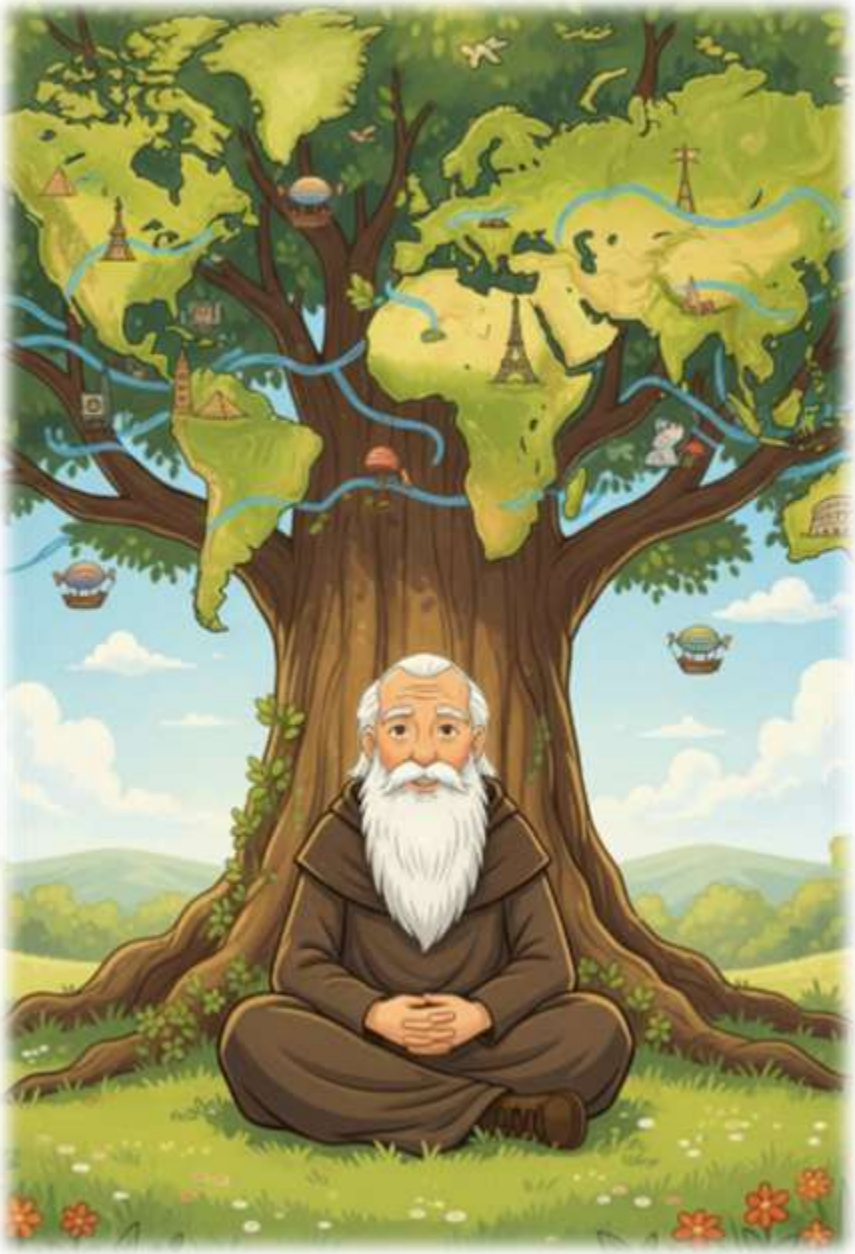
Arnold waved until the ship was a speck. He wasn't sad; he was proud. The love was on the move!

Discussion Question: How can you share kindness with someone who is far away? *(Think of a letter, a drawing, or a prayer).* Write it down.

Chapter 6:

From One Seed, A Great Forest

(1909-Today)



Father Arnold, now with a long, white beard, worked and prayed at the Mission House for 34 years. When he went to heaven on **January 15, 1909**, something amazing happened. His one small seed hadn't just grown into a tree—it had grown into a whole **forest**! Today, the family he started *(the Divine Word Missionaries and the Sisters)* has nearly **10,000 members** in **over 80 countries**. They are in schools, hospitals, and villages everywhere, still sharing that same love. The seed from a little boy's heart changed the world.

Activity: Plant a Seed of Kindness.

- Get a bean seed and a cup with soil.
- As you plant it, think of one kind promise to yourself: "I will help someone today," or "I will be a good friend."
- Care for your seed. As it grows, let it remind you that your small acts of kindness can grow into something big and beautiful, just like Arnold's dream.

Chapter 7:

A Saint for the Whole World

(2003)

For many, many years after Arnold went to heaven, people all over the world remembered his big dream. They saw how the tiny seed had grown into a great forest of kindness. Priests, sisters, and brothers from his family were helping people on every continent!

Because of this amazing life, something very special happened.
On **October 5, 2003**, in a huge, beautiful square in Rome called Saint Peter's, Pope John Paul II stood before a joyful crowd. He declared that Arnold Janssen was a **Saint**! This meant that the Church officially said, "Arnold's life is a brilliant example for everyone. He is surely in heaven, and we can ask him to pray for us."

Now, every year on **January 15**, the day he went to heaven, we celebrate his **Feast Day**. It's a day to remember his courage, to thank God for the great forest of his mission, and to ask Saint Arnold to help us be brave planters of our own seeds of love.

Feast Day Activity: Make a Celebration Banner!

Cut a piece of paper into a banner shape. Decorate it with symbols from Arnold's story: draw a **seed**, a **small inn**, a **sailing ship**, or a **big globe**. Write "**Saint Arnold, pray for us!**" at the top. Hang it up on January 15th to celebrate!

Meet Our Missionaries in our Area!

Activities to Get to Know Fr. Yanbo, Fr. Erik & Fr. Justin

Hey Kids! Did you know the priests right here in our partnership of Parishes are part of Saint Arnold Janssen's big family? They are **Divine Word Missionaries (SVD)**, just like the ones he sent to China long ago. Let's get to know them and their special mission better!

Activity 1: Create a "Missionary Passport"

Make a passport to learn about the journey of a Divine Word Missionary!

- **Instructions:** Staple 3-4 pieces of paper together to make a small booklet. On the cover, write "**Divine Word Missionary Passport**" and draw the SVD symbol *(a cross with the words "Verbum Dei").*
- **Page 1: The Missionary's Name.** Write "This passport belongs to: _____" and leave a blank. After you meet or learn about one of our priests, write his name *(Fr. Yanbo, Fr. Erik, or Fr. Justin.)* and draw his picture!
- **Page 2: Home Mission.** Our priests work right here! Draw a picture of our church, or something you love about our parish community.
- **Page 3: Global Mission.** Divine Word Missionaries work all over the world. Pick one of the **80+ countries** they serve *(like Mexico, India, or Papua New Guinea).* Draw the flag and find one fun fact about that country to write down.

Activity 2: Interview a Missionary!

Here are some questions you could ask **Fr. Yanbo, Fr. Erik, or Fr. Justin** if you see them after Mass or at a parish event. *(Remember to be polite and say please and thank you!).*

- "What is your favourite thing about being a priest?"
- "Can you tell us a story about Saint Arnold Janssen that you like?"
- "Have you ever lived in or visited another country? What was it like?"
- "How can we, as kids, help with the mission of sharing God's love?"
- **After your interview**, draw a picture of something you learned from them in the space below!

My Drawing...

Activity 3: Prayer Warriors & Helping Hands

Just like Saint Arnold needed everyone - priests, brothers, and sisters - to help, we can all play a part in the mission right here!

- **Be a Prayer Warrior *(Like the Pink Sisters!):*** Draw and Colour in a cross † every morning this week when you say one prayer for our missionaries.
    - Monday
    - Tuesday
    - Wednesday
    - Thursday
    - Friday
    - Saturday
    - Sunday

- **Be a Helping Hand *(Like the Missionary Sisters!):*** Circle one kind action you can do this week to help someone in our parish partnership "family."
    - Help tidy up after a parish event.
    - Make a "Thank You" card for a parish volunteer.
    - Be a friendly face and say hello to someone new at Mass.
    - Donate some of your toys to a parish charity drive.

Remember: You don't have to sail to a faraway country to be a missionary. By praying, helping, and being kind, you are already helping Fr. Yanbo, Fr. Erik, and Fr. Justin with their very important work!

Space for my thoughts, prayers & scribblings

A Child's Prayer to Saint Arnold Janssen

Dear Saint Arnold,
You started with a seed of love so small,
and took a big, brave step to follow God's call.
You built a family that circles the earth,
sharing our faith and celebrating each birth.
Help me to be brave in my own little way,
to plant seeds of kindness every day.
When my dream feels small, please help it grow,
so everyone around me Your great love will know. ***Amen.***

"Saint Arnold Janssen shows us that with faith, courage, and a heart full of love, anyone can change the world. What will your seed of kindness grow into?"