

In memoriam Arnulf Pierre Camps, OFM

Arnulf Pierre Camps, Dutch Franciscan and missiologist of repute, made his advanced theological and missiological studies at the universities of Nijmegen (Netherlands) and Fribourg (Switzerland). In 1957 Camps defended his doctoral dissertation on Jerome Xavier, S.J. and the Muslims of the Mogul Empire, XVIII + 260p. His extensive traveling enabled him to gain a deeper insight and positive appreciation of numerous cultures, religions and to meet in person leading personalities in both fields.

The list of his publications is impressive. Between 1946 and 2005 Camps published 8 monographs and 7 brief publications, edited jointly 7 scholarly studies, wrote 15 miscellanea and 338 articles. Besides he contributed 230 book reviews to both scientific and popular magazines.

Prof. Camps was not only a prolific writer but also a dedicated teacher for many years: first as professor at the Major Seminary in Karachi, Pakistan (1957-1961) and subsequently at the theological faculty of the Radboud University at Nijmegen (1963-1990). After 1990 Dr Camps continued assisting many students in their studies. Camps took an active part in numerous consultations, meetings, conferences, debates and often delivered lectures on these occasions. From 1964 to 1980 he was consultant of the Secretariat for non-Christians, and later on member of the Pontifical Council on Inter-religious dialogue.

At the University of Nijmegen he saw to it that the section missiology was integrated into the faculty of Theology. He personally assisted about 30 students in their doctoral graduation studies and in the writing of their theses. In more than 70 other missiological promotions Arnulf Camps was personally involved. He actively promoted the founda-

tion of IIMO, the Inter-University Institute for Missiology and Ecumenism and was its president for more than ten years. Also, Camps was co-founder of the International Association for Mission Studies, and served as its president for four years.

Arnulf Pierre Camps described his ministry as a pilgrimage in the land of religious dialogue. He entitled his inaugural address at the Nijmegen University «In Christ joined together with the world religions» which he pursued further in his lifelong program of studies and other activities. He sought to understand the deeper aspirations by visiting their many palaces, tombs, mosques and shrines. He was keen to meet their spiritual leaders, Pirs, and learned scholars. He admired the cultural heritage of the Mogul emperors. He often told how Colonel Ghadaffi, ruler of Libya, greeted him with charm and respect during a religious dialogue between Islam and Christianity in his country.

In later years Camps took a personal interest in the fate of Chinese Christians and their Church. He also made numerous visits to Mainland China which enabled him to remain informed about local developments.

His first contact with the Franciscan history took place at the dining table of his parental home where his father read aloud a book on Saint Francis by the Flemish poet Felix Timmermans. He developed his knowledge and love for the Franciscan tradition and attended several of their Chapters and conventions. As recently as last year Arnulf shared his Franciscan insights and experiences with a group of friars – nicknamed the ‘Wise Men’ – as part of an informal event held at the Franciscans International office in Geneva.

Professor Camps concluded his intensely busy life with a study on the Holy Qu’ran which book will soon be published.

Friar Arnulf Pierre Camps died on March 5, 2006, of a brain hemorrhage at the age of 81. At his well-attended funeral relatives, friends and colleagues paid tribute to his person and his career.

Anselm Moons, OFM