

Fr. Herbert Vogelpohl

January 12th is the anniversary of the death of Father Herbert Vogelpohl. Leo Vogelpohl was born in Spielerville (now Subiaco) Arkansas, on December 3, 1911, and grew up on the family farm located near the abbey.

He received his elementary education at St. Benedict School in Subiaco and then attended Subiaco Academy, graduating with the class of 1931. His priestly vocation was threatened with poor health and he had to leave his studies for a year. Leo Vogelpohl later returned and professed his vows as a monk of our monastery on September 16, 1934, receiving the name Herbert. He was ordained to the priesthood by Bishop John B. Morris at the cathedral of St. Andrew in Little Rock on June 3, 1939.

From 1940-53, Father Herbert was assigned to St. Mary Church in Fort Worth, Texas, assisting with parish work and teaching at Laneri High School. He served as coach and organized interscholastic sports programs, and assisted with activities for the Sodality of the Blessed Virgin Mary. He was known city-wide for his work with youth. On weekends, he assisted with Masses at the parishes of St. George and St. Alice. For 10 years he was a Boy Scout leader, receiving the Scoutmaster's Key award.

In 1953, Father Herbert returned to Subiaco. He served as dean of students at the academy for two years, and continued until 1962 as instructor in religion and mathematics, serving for a time as academy librarian.

Following studies in psychology and family life at St. Louis University in 1962, Father Herbert became director of Coury House and retreats for the abbey. One retreat that he directed was for high school youth. A young student attending the retreat, Peter Sartain, spoke to Father Herbert about a religious vocation. Father Herbert lived to see this same young man--Peter Sartain--become the sixth Bishop of Little Rock.

Besides giving retreats, Father Herbert developed spiritual renewal programs for various organizations, did individual counseling, and supervised day-to-day operations of the Coury House facility and its staff. From 1958-72 he was the Oblate director of Subiaco Abbey. He was also instrumental in the development of the Marriage Encounter apostolate of the diocese. On March 8, 1964, he established the Abbey Retreat League which promotes retreats at Subiaco and financially assists the abbey in being a Benedictine house of hospitality.

Father Herbert continued his duties at Coury House until his semi-retirement in 1984, remaining active, however, in substitute parish work and retreat assignments. In 1986-88 he traveled to Texarkana, Arkansas, to help the Incarnate Word Sisters with community renewal and spirituality.

Retiring to the monastic Health Center in 1988, he still made himself available for retreat and counseling ministry. In 1997 Father Herbert broke his left shoulder and the following year he broke his right hip. With therapy, and his indefatigable determination to be ambulant, he was able to get around with the use of a wheelchair and walker.

Once again he was available for retreat and counseling ministry, and he joined the monks in the Health Center for recitation of the Divine Office and rosary devotions. He concelebrated Mass with the monks and attended other community exercises as he was able. He remained genial and interested in everyone. Of his seven decades of life as a Benedictine monk, Father Herbert said: "From all my activities and priestly work, two impressions remain with me; first, people are wonderful, and secondly, God has been good to me through the years."

During the final months of his life, Father Herbert's stamina steadily ebbed away and he died of apparent congestive heart failure at 6:45 p.m. on Wednesday, January 12, 2005, in the monastic Health Center, strengthened with the sacraments and the prayers of the community.



The Wake service for Father Herbert was held at 7:00 p.m. on Friday, January 14, 2005. At the end of the service Bishop J. Peter Sartain gave a short reminiscence. On Saturday, January 15, Abbot Jerome Kodell was celebrant and homilist for the 10:00 a.m. Mass of Christian burial and performed the final obsequies in the vestibule of the church. (Heavy January rains made it impossible for anyone to go to the cemetery. The corpse was buried privately after the church service.)

At the time of his death, Father Herbert was 93 years old and the eldest member in the community. He had been a professed monk for 70 years and a priest for 65 years. He is buried in our cemetery.