

Father Francis Zimmerer

January 23rd is the anniversary of the death of Father Francis Zimmerer. Hugo Zimmerer was born in Lindsay, Texas, on November 1, 1908. He entered our high school scholasticate in 1922, the year it was formed, graduating from our academy with the class of 1926. He professed his vows as a monk of our monastery on October 5, 1927, receiving the name Francis. He was ordained to the priesthood by Bishop John B. Morris at St. Andrew's Cathedral in Little Rock on May 21, 1932.

Father Francis taught in the academy for one year. After seven years as assistant pastor in Muenster, Texas, he became pastor at Windthorst, Texas. At the outbreak of World War II, Father Francis became a chaplain in the U.S. Army and served on active duty in the Pacific until the end of the war. Upon returning to the abbey he was appointed Director of the Brothers and pastor of St. Benedict's Parish at Subiaco. His good zeal brought many new candidates to the religious life. He was also responsible for the establishment of the local credit union.

In 1951 Father Francis returned to Windthorst as pastor and completed a building program that he and the parishioners had undertaken 10 years earlier. In the 1960s Father Francis worked as a rehabilitation counselor in Arkansas under various state-run programs. In the late 60s and early 70s he served as chaplain of a veterans' hospital in Wisconsin, and later as chaplain at a hospital and school for the mentally retarded in the same state.

In 1975, Father Francis returned to the parochial ministry at Decatur, Texas, and in 1981 went to Morrison Bluff, Arkansas. It was there that he suffered a heart attack early Sunday morning, January 23, 1983.

Father Francis phoned the abbey and asked for someone to say Sunday Mass for him at Morrison Bluff because he felt ill. Abbot Raphael administered the sacrament of the anointing of the sick, and then Father Francis was rushed to the North Logan Memorial Hospital in Paris, Arkansas, where he died at 11:22 a. m. of cardiopulmonary arrest.

Abbot Raphael was celebrant of the Mass of Christian burial on Wednesday, January 26. At the time of his death, Father Francis was 74 years old and in the 55th year of his monastic profession, the 50th of his priesthood. He is buried in our cemetery.

