

Brother Ildephonse Burke

December 5th is the anniversary of the death of Brother Ildephonse Burke. Joseph Burke was born on June 23, 1903, in Buffalo, New York. He attended Catholic elementary schools in Buffalo, and he graduated from Canisius High School, a secondary Catholic institution in the same city.

Joseph and his brother were orphaned in their youth, and they were taken care of by relatives. Joseph's uncle, Father Joseph Harrington, a diocesan priest in Buffalo, became his mentor. Joseph attended college classes for a while, and he did custodial work at Holy Name Church where his uncle was pastor.

Joseph had an appreciation for the arts, and he was a member of the Buffalo Symphony in which he was a violinist.

For some time Joseph desired to enter monastic life and study for the priesthood. From 1930 to 1932, he was with the Franciscan Friars of the Atonement in New York, but he withdrew due to poor health.

Later he spent five months with the Cistercians in Rhode Island, but again withdrew for health reasons.

The following year he served as manager of the parish plant at Holy Name Church in Buffalo, remaining in this position for seven years, from 1935 to 1942.

At age 39, and still interested in a monastic vocation, Joseph Burke came to Subiaco on July 24, 1942. Two years later on April 26, 1944, he professed his vows as a monk of our monastery, receiving the name Ildephonse.

Brother Ildephonse served our community for nearly four decades in the refectory, laundry, and as house custodian, caring especially for the student dormitories.

He played the violin for personal enjoyment and, on occasion, he played for community programs. Reading and private study were of interest to him, also.

Throughout the years, Brother Ildephonse went about his work in a quiet, serene manner. However, after suffering a stroke in the 1970s, he became, for a short period of time, quite loquacious, revealing a delightful wit as well as a depth of classical learning that his confreres were heretofore unaware of. All too soon, however, his health began to weaken.

For the final two years of his life, Brother Ildephonse was retired in the abbey infirmary, where he died at 11:00 p. m. on Sunday, December 5, 1982.

At the time of his death, Brother Ildephonse was 79 years old and in the 38th year of his monastic profession. He is buried in our cemetery.

