

## Father Boniface Spanke

December 11th is the anniversary of the death of Father Boniface Spanke. Anthony Spanke was born on May 12, 1873, in the village of Weringhausen, Germany.

When he was eight years old, Anthony came to the United States with his parents, arriving on March 9, 1881, and settling in Hartman, Arkansas. Following his elementary education there, he came to Subiaco on November 16, 1887, to begin his secondary studies. He graduated in 1892, becoming the first alumnus of Subiaco College.

Anthony Spanke professed his vows as a monk of our monastery on October 16, 1893, receiving the name Boniface. He was ordained to the priesthood by Bishop Edward M. Fitzgerald at St. Andrew's Cathedral in Little Rock, on June 9, 1897.

Into his 49 years of monastic life, Father Boniface crowded a colorful and multi-faceted career. As an educator, he rose to the position of rector of Subiaco College within 10 years of his ordination.

In pastoral ministry, he served the parishes of Ratcliff, Charleston, and Fort Smith in Arkansas; Wichita Falls, Texarkana, and Rhineland in Texas; and Nevada in Missouri.

Father Boniface was appointed resident pastor of Sacred Heart Church in Charleston, Arkansas, in 1900. During his six-year pastorate, the cornerstone of the new church was laid in 1902. The outside of the church was built of native stone. On June 12, 1904, the parish celebrated two events: the 25th anniversary of the founding of the parish, and the dedication of the new church.

In 1906, Father Boniface was recalled to the monastery. During his tenure at Subiaco, he served the needs of the academy, abbey, and missions.

His next assignment was pastor in Wichita Falls, Texas, where he drew the blueprint and carried out the plan of building the Catholic cemetery located there.

In 1927, Father Boniface was appointed pastor of St. Joseph's Church in Rhineland, Texas. During his eight-year pastorate, he designed and began the construction of the new parish church. Unfortunately, the Great Depression of 1929 which swept across the nation, hampered the efforts of completing the new church during his pastorate.

Father Boniface was recalled to the abbey in 1935, going by way of south Texas where he served for a time at Corpus Christi College-Academy.

Father Boniface served our community as manager of the abbey farm. Some of the improvements made during his tenure were the building of the dairy barn and procuring the herd of registered Holsteins that provided milk for the abbey and the school. He also started the chicken ranch which provided food for the dining table of the monks and students.

In 1942, the science laboratory was located in the center of the main building on the fifth floor. The top-most staircase made a sharp turn and next to the banister, the steps narrowed. Here at 7:00 p. m. on Thursday, December 10, 1942, Father Boniface slipped and fell in the semi-darkness as he descended from the laboratory where he had been working on a project. A doctor was summoned, and following his examination of the wounds, his prognosis was a quick recovery. However, Father Boniface, who for months had been afflicted with high blood pressure, was unable to recover from the shock and never regained consciousness.



Sixteen hours after the accident, with his confreres gathered about his bed in prayer, Father Boniface died in the abbey infirmary at 11:00 a. m. on Friday, December 11, 1942.

At the time of his death, Father Boniface was 69 years old and in the 49th year of his monastic profession, the 45th of his priesthood. He is buried in our cemetery.