Father Maurus Rohner

February 24th is the anniversary of the death of Father Maurus Rohner. William Rohner was born in Au, Canton St. Gall, Switzerland, on May 1, 1869. He came to the United States and to Subiaco with the "Expedition" of 1891 from the abbey of Einsiedeln led by Father Gall D'Aujourd'hui.

In this "Expedition" there were four candidates for the priesthood and eight for the brotherhood. Three in each group persevered, one being William Rohner. He professed his vows as a monk of our monastery on Christmas Day, 1892, receiving the name Maurus. He was ordained to the priesthood by Bishop Edward M. Fitzgerald at St. Andrew's Cathedral in Little Rock on May 3, 1896.

After ordination he was an instructor in the abbey and served as procurator. For a brief period he was pastor in Clarksville. It was in pastoral work that Father Maurus served our community for the greater part of his life.

His longest field of labor, 31 years, was at St. Edward's in Little Rock, where he served as assistant pastor from 1902 until 1906, when he was appointed pastor. He served as pastor until his death in 1933.

It was under his guidance that the present St. Edward's Church was built; it was completed in 1910. He also had the old two-story frame church building near Ninth and Ferry streets remodeled into a schoolhouse. Later he had a two-story brick home built for the sisters who taught at the school.

Father Maurus was known for his great kindness and hospitality and for his great beard. The story is told that he was once mistaken for a Rabbi at the Little Rock train station by the Jewish community of that city who thought that he was their new Rabbi, whom they had come down to the station to greet.

Father Maurus became ill in January of 1931, and the following month underwent major surgery which was followed by eight other operations. He entered St. Joseph's Hospital in Hot Springs, Arkansas, in January of 1933. A few days before his death at 6:20 p.m. on Friday, February 24, 1933, he sank into a coma.

The body of Father Maurus was brought from Hot Springs to Little Rock to lie in state at St. Edward's Church. A Mass was celebrated there at 10:00 a.m. on Monday, February 27.

At the time of his death, Father Maurus was 64 years old and in the 41st year of his monastic profession, the 37th of his priesthood. He is buried in our cemetery.