

## Father Athanasius Zehnder

February 9th is the anniversary of the death of Father Athanasius Zehnder. Father Athanasius was born in the town of Einsiedeln, Canton Schwyz, Switzerland, on July 13, 1877. He attended the Abbey School there.

In 1898, when Father Bonaventure Binzegger returned to the United States from a visit to Einsiedeln, priest-candidate Athanasius Zehnder and brother-candidate Joseph Spirig traveled with him.

Father Athanasius professed his vows as a monk of our monastery on December 8, 1899, and was ordained to the priesthood by Bishop Edward M. Fitzgerald at St. Andrew's Cathedral in Little Rock on June 25, 1904.

Father Athanasius spent virtually his entire monastic life in pastoral work. He was assistant pastor at St. Edward's Church in Little Rock from 1910 to 1912. Thereafter, he held pastorates at St. Charles, Missouri, and Rhineland, Texas. In Arkansas he was pastor at Shoal Creek from 1913 to 1918; in Paris from 1918 to 1928; and in Clarksville from 1928 to 1940.

Father Athanasius had a great love for music; he himself played several musical instruments and was an accomplished violinist. He put this innate talent to good use in his pastoral ministry by encouraging and working with the parish choir members, and by reorganizing parish bands.

During his pastorate in the 1920s at St. Joseph's in Paris, Father Athanasius led the parish in the building of the present brick church, obtaining much volunteer parish labor and subscriptions all over Logan County. With the Great Depression of 1929, however, the church debt fell into the hands of succeeding pastors.

During his pastorate in Clarksville, Father Athanasius was stricken with influenza and pneumonia. He died on Friday, February 9, 1940, in the Clarksville Hospital, after suffering from these illnesses for six weeks.

At the time of his death, Father Athanasius was 62 years old and in the 40th year of his monastic profession, the 35th of his priesthood. He is buried in our cemetery.

