

Father Felix Fredeman

June 1st is the anniversary of the death of Father Felix Fredeman. Thomas Henry Fredeman was born in Little Rock, Arkansas, on August 30, 1932. The first six years of his elementary education were in Little Rock: grades one thru five at Oakhurst public school and grade six at Good Counsel parochial school.

In 1944 he came to Subiaco Academy and enrolled in the Prep department as a seventh grader. Two years later he began his secondary education in the academy where he was especially active in music and dramatics, graduating with the class of 1950.

He entered Subiaco Abbey where he professed his vows as a monk of our monastery on September 14, 1952, receiving the name Felix. He was ordained to the priesthood by Bishop Albert L. Fletcher at St. Andrew's Cathedral in Little Rock on May 30, 1957.

With the beginning of the 1957-58 school year, Father Felix taught religion at Subiaco Academy.

The following school year he attended the University of Notre Dame, Indiana. He then resumed teaching religion, typing, art, and English in the academy.

During the summer months he attended classes at Benedictine Heights, Tulsa, Oklahoma; Conception Abbey, Missouri; and the University of Notre Dame where in 1962 he received a master's degree in art.

For the school year 1964-65, Father Felix was art instructor at St. Bernard's College, Cullman, Alabama.

Upon his return to Arkansas he began pastoral work in the Subiaco deanery. He was appointed assistant pastor of St. Joseph's Church, Paris, and weekend pastor of St. Anthony's mission in Ratcliff.

Father Felix commuted from Paris to Subiaco on weekdays to teach in the art department. In 1970 he was appointed resident pastor of St. Anthony's Church, commuting 15 miles from Ratcliff to teach in the academy.

Two years later he was recalled to the abbey to serve as prior of the monastery, a position he held until 1991, continuing to teach art classes in the academy.

Father Felix celebrated his 25th anniversary of priesthood in 1982. Along with his priestly ministry, he gave of his time and talent to teaching, administration, graphic design, art related skills, and directing technical theater. He also designed the annual abbey calendar and seasonal Christmas card.

Father Felix was the system administrator of the abbey's first computer network and he also did the computer layouts for the abbey's Divine Office books.

In 1999—after four decades of teaching—Father Felix retired from the classroom due to failing health. In September 2000 he underwent a spine operation, and after a lengthy convalescence, assumed the role of Computer Editor of the Abbey Message, Alumni News and calendar. Father Felix was chairman of the committee preparing for the renovation of the monastic living area, which got underway in 2004.



In 2003 Father Felix began chemotherapy for pancreatic cancer in 2003. During this difficult time he tried to dwell on the blessings of his life rather than its condition. In early March 2004 Father Felix said: "I will appreciate your continued prayers and thank you for your support. It makes me proud to be a part of this community." Until two days before his death, he remained an active member of the community, traveling in his motorized wheelchair to his various assignments in the abbey.

Strengthened with the sacraments and the prayers of his brother monks, Father Felix died in his room in the monastic Health Center at 8:15 p.m. on Tuesday, June 1, 2004, from apparent congestive heart failure resulting from pancreatic cancer.

On Friday, June 4, Abbot Jerome Kodell was celebrant and homilist for the 10:00 a.m. Mass of Christian burial and performed the final obsequies.

Father Felix's decades of love and service are engraved in the hearts and minds of many and in the very soul of the abbey/academy complex.

At the time of his death, Father Felix was 71 years old. He had been a professed monk for 51 years and a priest for 47 years. He is buried in our cemetery.