

Father Joseph Huwyler

May 31st is the anniversary of the death of Father Joseph Huwyler. Kaspar Huwyler was born in the town of Sins, Canton Aargau, Switzerland, on December 12, 1864. He is one of the "Eight Beatitudes" who came to the United States and to St. Benedict's Priory in 1887 with the "Great Expedition" from the abbey of Einsiedeln led by Father Gall D'Aujourd'hui.

Kaspar Huwyler professed his vows as a monk of our monastery on October 24, 1888, receiving the name Joseph. He was ordained to the priesthood by Bishop Edward M. Fitzgerald at St. Andrew's Cathedral in Little Rock on November 6, 1892.

Father Joseph served our community for many years in the parish missions. From 1892 to 1895, he was appointed missionary-pastor of St. Joseph's Church in Paris, Arkansas, and in 1899 he was appointed as the first resident pastor of this parish.

It was always a welcome sight for parishioners to see their pastor galloping in his two-wheeled cart, his coat tails flying in the breeze, making his parish calls. During his pastorate, the frame church was enlarged and the parish became known for its choir and brass band.

In 1911, Father Joseph became pastor of Sacred Heart Church in Muenster, Texas. For the next seven years, Father Joseph served the needs of this German Catholic colony.

A lover of music and a man with a resounding bass voice, Father Joseph promoted the church choir and parish band. During his pastorate, a new sisters' house and rectory were built. He himself, assisted by Father Justin Wewer, was the architect of the rectory which stands today as a stately monument of the style of early 20th century architecture.

On November 5, 1917, Father Joseph celebrated his silver jubilee of priesthood. Parishioners honored him with a gala celebration, and no one seemed happier and apparently in better health than Father Joseph. But within a few months, Father Joseph was a very sick man.

When in March of 1918 Father Joseph left Muenster for a diagnosis of a stomach ailment, he was destined never to return. He was sent to the Mayo Clinic, Rochester, Minnesota, where his ailment was traced to cancer of the stomach. When the Mayo Brothers declared his case incurable, with only a month to live, Father Joseph retired to the abbey, where, exactly one month later, he died in the abbey infirmary on Friday, May 31, 1918, surrounded by his confreres.

At the time of his death, Father Joseph was 53 years old and in the 29th year of his monastic profession, the 25th of his priesthood. He is buried in our cemetery.

