

Father Thomas Buergler

July 10th is the anniversary of the death of Father Thomas Aquinas Buergler. Anthony Buergler was born in Fort Smith, Arkansas, on August 16, 1894, where he attended parochial school before coming to Subiaco in 1908 for high school and seminary studies. For one year he studied philosophy at Conception Abbey in Missouri.

Anthony Buergler professed his vows as a monk of our monastery on September 8, 1915, receiving the name Thomas Aquinas. He was ordained to the priesthood by Bishop John B. Morris at Subiaco on May 28, 1922.

From 1922 to 1927, Father Thomas was assistant prefect and biology teacher in our academy. When the abbey's new foundation, Corpus Christi College-Academy in Corpus Christi, Texas, opened its door for the 1928-1929 school term, Father Thomas was one of the founding members, serving as prefect and Latin teacher during its first school year.

Following his years in the classroom, Father Thomas began parochial work, a ministry that would be his life for the next four decades. From 1929 to 1933, he was pastor of Holy Family Church in Nazareth, Texas. From 1933 to 1942, he was pastor of St. Joseph's Church in Paris, Arkansas. He was the first native Arkansan pastor in Paris.

He then returned to Texas as pastor of Sacred Heart Church in Muenster from 1942 to 1945. With U.S. involvement in World War II at this time, Father Thomas also served on Sundays as chaplain at the nearby military base of Camp Howze.

From 1945 to 1947, Father Thomas served as pastor of St. Joseph's Church in Rhineland, Texas. From there he moved to south Texas as the founding pastor of the new St. Theresa's Church in Corpus Christi, where he served until 1957.

Father Thomas was then recalled to Arkansas to be pastor of St. Mary's Church in Altus, from 1957 to 1968. He then returned to Texas to serve as chaplain at Our Lady of Loretto Chapel in Goliad from 1968 to 1972.

In his parish ministry, Father Thomas was noted for his care of the sick, and for his ability to pay off parish debts, and to raise funds to build new churches.

In 1972, Father Thomas retired from active ministry due to failing health and returned to the monastery. It was during this same year that he celebrated his golden sacerdotal jubilee. During his final years he was confined to a wheelchair because of a broken hip, but he concelebrated Mass daily with his confreres and joined them at table and other exercises until the final weeks of his life.

Father Thomas' transition from a life-style of an active pastor to retirement and a wheelchair life-style, was not an easy cross, but he accepted the transition as God's will in his life.

Father Thomas died at Subiaco on Thursday evening, July 10, 1980, from apparent heart failure.

At the time of his death, Father Thomas was 85 years old, and in the 64th year of his monastic profession, the 58th of his priesthood. He is buried in our cemetery.

