

Father Paul Hoedebeck

July 26th is the anniversary of the death of Father Paul Hoedebeck. Frederick Ralph Hoedebeck was born in Muenster, Texas, on May 21, 1915. He was the 11th child in a family of 18 children, 13 boys and five girls. This is the largest recorded number of children in any family who lived in Muenster, Texas.

Fred received his elementary education at Sacred Heart School in Muenster. With the onslaught of the Great Depression in 1930, the family, along with several other Catholic families from North Texas, moved to Washita Farms in Tishomingo, Oklahoma, where he began classes at Washita High School.

In 1932, Fred came to Subiaco Academy for his secondary education, graduating with the class of 1936. He then entered Subiaco Abbey where he professed his vows as a monk of our monastery on September 15, 1938, receiving the name Alvin. (He wanted to receive the name Paul, but at the time there was another member in the community with this name.)

However, six months later, the community's abbatial election voted Father Paul Nahlen as third abbot of Subiaco Abbey. Frater Alvin Hoedebeck then received the name Paul at his final profession on September 15, 1941. Shortly before his profession he was appointed 2nd Master of Ceremonies for assisted Masses. A year later he was also appointed 1st Master of Ceremonies for all Pontifical celebrations. He was ordained to the priesthood by Bishop Albert L. Fletcher at Saint Andrew's Cathedral in Little Rock on Ascension Thursday, June 3, 1943.

Giving wholeheartedly of his time and efforts for seven decades in religious life, Father Paul often had overlapping assignments. He taught Latin, English, and other subjects at Subiaco Academy for two decades. In September 1943 he was also appointed infirmarian, a position he held for almost three decades. In 1944 another duty was added to his schedule; namely, supervisor of the student dining room. He held this position for 20 years.

In 1945 Father Paul was appointed Custodian of Masses and assistant director in the Development Office. A year later he was selected to head the Development Program and for the next 25 years he was fundraiser as well as record keeper of all donations contributed toward the construction of Alumni Hall, the Abbey Church, Coury House, Abbey Annex, Heard Hall, the field house and library.

He also served for periods of time in the community as subprior, archivist, guest master and secretary of the Alumni Association.

For his 25th anniversary of priesthood, Father Paul was chaplain of a group of 33 pilgrims who toured the shrines of Europe during the summer of 1968.

Following three decades of faithful service in community assignments, Father Paul began a new ministry in the parish apostolate for the Subiaco deanery. In 1972 he was appointed administrator of St. Joseph Church, Paris, Arkansas, and six months later he was assigned the pastorate, serving in this capacity until 1983.

He was then appointed pastor of St. Benedict Church, Subiaco, until 1989 at which time he was re-assigned as pastor of St. Joseph Church in Paris. He continued in this capacity until mid-1991 when he was recalled to the abbey for a year's rest.



Rejuvenated by autumn 1992, he again became Custodian of Masses and in November he was appointed to serve as commuter pastor of St. Scholastica Church in Shoal Creek, Arkansas.

Father Paul was blessed with good health all his life, but the inevitable disabilities of old age forced him to recycle his energies. He continued to work on the abbey grounds as well as fulfilling many needs within the community. He always believed if a job was worth doing, it was worth doing right.

In 2003 Father Paul celebrated his diamond jubilee of priesthood. For this occasion, he attended a parish celebration in his hometown on August 10th at Sacred Heart Church, Muenster, Texas, where, 60 years ago he said his first Mass. Father Paul's three siblings were in attendance: Joe and Eugene Hoedebeck and Philomena (Hoedebeck) Howell, as well as a sister-in-law Mrs. Norbert Hoedebeck.

On March 15, 2008, friends, relatives and monks were invited to Subiaco to celebrate the life of Father Paul with a Mass and reception in his honor.

During his last year there had been a major effort to honor Father Paul for all that he had done here at Subiaco and in the Subiaco ministries. Members of his family and alumni who had known Father Paul initiated an endowment fund that will serve in the future to continue the work that he had been involved in here at the Abbey. Specifically the fund will be called the Father Paul Church Maintenance Fund, and this fund will be used to maintain Saint Benedict Church, on which Father Paul spent so much of his efforts raising funds so that it could be completed.

Father Paul died on July 26, 2008. At the time of his death, Father Paul was 93 years old. He had been a professed monk for 69 years and a priest for 65 years. He is buried in our cemetery.