

Father Thomas Keller

July 15th is the anniversary of the death of Father Thomas Aquinas Keller. Adam Keller was born in 1864 in Wiesbaden, Germany. As a young man he worked for several years as a teacher in his native country. He came to the United States and to our monastery with the "Expedition" of 1889 from the abbey of Einsiedeln led by Father Pius Zwysig.

In this "Expedition" which arrived at St. Benedict's Priory on October 6, there were two priests and six students of whom four were candidates for the priesthood and two were candidates for the brotherhood. Of the candidates, four persevered, one being Adam Keller who professed his vows as a monk of our monastery on October 15, 1890, receiving the name Thomas Aquinas.

Though not yet ordained a priest, but due to his experience as a teacher in Germany, Frater Thomas was appointed prefect of the scholasticate in 1892, a position he held until 1897. He was ordained to the priesthood by Bishop Edward M. Fitzgerald at St. Andrew's Cathedral in Little Rock on November 3, 1893.

Father Thomas studied for one summer at St. John's Abbey, Collegeville, Minnesota, and he served as missionary pastor in Missouri, Arkansas, and Texas. From 1898 to 1899 he supervised the construction of the abbey at its present location.

In 1902 Father Thomas was made pastor of St. Boniface Church, Fort Smith, Arkansas, where he served for eight years. He had a great love for music and the liturgy, and he himself was an accomplished organist. Each Sunday at St. Boniface Church, Father Thomas celebrated afternoon Vespers with his parishioners.

Ill health forced his resignation as pastor in 1910. In an attempt to restore his health, Father Thomas returned to his native Wiesbaden, Germany, where he hoped to find relief by use of the mineral waters there. However, he died suddenly on Friday, July 15, 1910, two weeks after his arrival.

At the time of his death, Father Thomas was 46 years old and in 20th year of his monastic profession, the 16th of his priesthood. He is buried in the city of his birth: Wiesbaden, Germany.

