

Father Maurus Gerke

January 25th is the anniversary of the death of Father Maurus Gerke. William Gerke was born on September 25, 1915, in Prescott, Arkansas. He attended St. Edward's School in Little Rock and one year at Catholic High. He then attended our academy, graduating with the class of 1938. He professed his vows as a monk of our monastery on September 14, 1940, receiving the name Maurus. He was ordained to the priesthood by Bishop Albert L. Fletcher at St. Andrew's Cathedral in Little Rock on May 31, 1945.

During the latter half of the 1940s he taught business courses and served as prefect of students. In the 1950s he filled the dual responsibilities of prior of the abbey and business manager. It was during this time that the abbey church was being built, and he was responsible for all business details involved in this work. Meanwhile, during the declining health of Abbot Paul, his responsibilities as prior of the abbey were also especially heavy.

In 1960, Father Maurus was appointed pastor of St. Mary's Church in Fort Worth, Texas, serving there for almost two years before his appointment as pastor of St. Boniface Church in Fort Smith, Arkansas, where he served for almost 14 years. During his pastorate there he made many improvements in the parish plant by building an auditorium-cafeteria, renovating the church, and building a new rectory.

But his faithful spiritual ministry was the major concern of Father Maurus' pastorate; he was always at the call of his parishioners and other people in a life of truly dedicated service.

In 1975, in weakening health, Father Maurus was assigned to the smaller parish of Holy Redeemer in Clarksville, but soon his health broke, and he had to return to the abbey. Here he concelebrated daily Mass with his confreres as long as he was able. About a month before his death it was finally necessary for him to return to the hospital. His patience and hope were a constant inspiration to all who knew of his sufferings.

Father Maurus died from cancer on Sunday, January 25, 1976, at St. Edward Mercy Medical Center in Fort Smith, Arkansas. A funeral Mass was held at St. Boniface Church in Fort Smith on January 27, with the parishioners in attendance.

The body was then brought to Subiaco where final obsequies for Father Maurus were held on Wednesday, January 28, with his ordination classmate, Abbot Raphael, as celebrant of the Mass of Christian Burial.

At the time of his death, Father Maurus was 60 years old and in the 35th year of his monastic profession, the 30th of his priesthood. He is buried in our cemetery.

