

Father Placidus Oechsle

February 6th is the anniversary of the death of Father Placidus Oechsle. Rupert Oechsle was born on June 25, 1869, in the Grand Duchy of Baden, now in the Federal Republic of Germany.

Orphaned at an early age, he found loving and devoted foster parents in a thrifty farmer and his wife in the Black Forest region of Germany. He was destined for the teaching profession, and accordingly was sent for higher education to a teachers' seminary, where his inclination towards art was also fostered. A legacy left him by his guardians enabled him to enter the Abbey School at Einsiedeln. Upon completion of his secondary studies there, he enlisted for the mission in Arkansas.

Rupert Oechsle came to the United States and to Subiaco with the "Expedition" of 1891 from the abbey of Einsiedeln led by his cousin Father Gall D'Aujourd'hui.

In this "Expedition" there were four candidates for the priesthood and eight candidates for the brotherhood. Three in each group persevered, one being Rupert Oechsle. He professed his vows as a monk of our monastery on Christmas Day, 1892, receiving the name Placidus. He was ordained to the priesthood by Bishop Edward M. Fitzgerald at St. Andrew's Cathedral in Little Rock on May 3, 1896.

His studies had weakened his health so Father Placidus was sent to Altus as a temporary pastor to restore his health. His health improved so much that he remained there for the next 38 years. It was under his guidance that the present church was built. During his time as pastor, St. Mary's rectory became a common vacation spot for the monks of Subiaco, and Father Placidus was always a gracious host.

He was noted as a great promoter of German immigration to the Arkansas River Valley, and was a member of the Missouri Pacific Immigration Bureau. Father Placidus was also a great promoter of the Catholic Central Union, and was instrumental in the organization's growth in Arkansas.

After suffering from a heart affliction for several years, and after having been hospitalized since the previous autumn, Father Placidus died on Wednesday, February 6, 1935.

At the time of his death, Father Placidus was 65 years old and in the 42nd year of his monastic profession, the 38th of his priesthood. He is buried in our cemetery.

