

Father Peter Sharum

November 1st is the anniversary of the death of Father Peter Sharum. Father Peter was born February 2, 1927, in Fort Smith, Arkansas, the ninth child in a family of 10 children. He was christened Paul William. He attended St. Boniface elementary school in Fort Smith, followed by three years of secondary education at St. Anne Academy in the same city. He came to Subiaco Academy for his senior year, graduating with the class of 1945.

Paul Sharum entered Subiaco Abbey, professing his vows as a monk on September 16, 1947, receiving the name Peter. During his clerical years of study, he was sacristan, and during the summer months he was in charge of the Abbey's canning operation and maintenance of the abbey cemetery. On May 31, 1952, he was ordained to the priesthood by Bishop Albert L. Fletcher at the Cathedral of St. Andrew in Little Rock.

Following his ordination, Father Peter was on the faculty of Subiaco Academy where he taught English, history and religion. On weekends he assisted at Christ the King parish in Fort Smith. During the summer months he was in Missouri, enrolled at St. Louis University. His next appointment came in 1954 as pastor of two Arkansas missions: St. Anthony parish in Ratcliff and Our Lady of the Assumption parish in Booneville while remaining on the faculty of the academy.

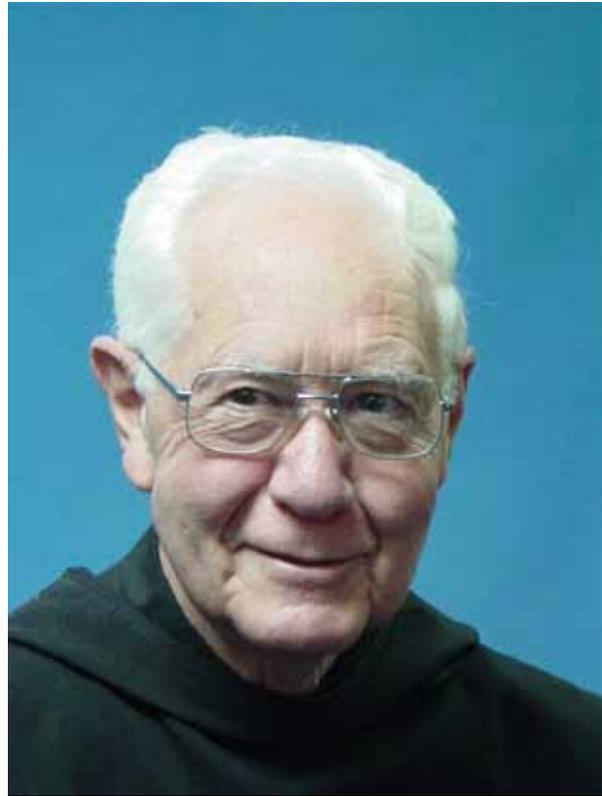
In 1955 Father Peter was assigned Academy chaplain as well as a classroom teacher. In 1957 he was once again appointed pastor of the parishes in Ratcliff and Booneville as well as serving a six-month chaplaincy at the State Tuberculosis Sanatorium in Booneville. In 1958 he became the assistant director of the abbey's clerics and novices.

The following year he ministered for three months in the mission parishes of St. Scholastica in Shoal Creek and St. Meinrad in Prairie View. In mid-April, 1959, he was appointed pastor of his home parish, St. Boniface in Fort Smith. In 1962 he was named pastor of St. Joseph Church in Paris. Two years later he returned to Subiaco to become pastor of St. Benedict parish. It was during his pastorate that the new parish school and rectory were constructed. In 1975 he was named pastor of Sacred Heart parish in Charleston. During his pastorate the new Sacred Heart rectory was built. By 1983 his next assignment was the pastorate of St. Edward parish in Little Rock where he served until May 1990.

He then received his first and only Texas assignment, becoming Subiaco Abbey's last Benedictine pastor of St. Mary Church in Windthorst. Due to ever growing shortage of priests available for pastoral ministry, the Subiaco Abbey Chapter voted to withdraw permanently from this distant parish even though it had been staffed by Subiaco Benedictines for nearly a hundred years. Father Peter's quiet steadiness bonded the parish together as they bade farewell in July 1992.

Returning to Arkansas, Father Peter was assigned to Sacred Heart parish in Charleston where he had previously served from 1975-83. He was instrumental in establishing the Knights of Columbus Council at Sacred Heart in 2001. The following year he celebrated his golden jubilee of priesthood. Addressing the parishioners on the occasion, Father Peter said: "I'm starting on my second 50 years and I hope it doesn't go any faster than the first."

Father Peter spent over five decades in pastoral ministry, a gentle and beloved monk/priest. He retired to the Health Center from Sacred Heart Parish in September 2010.



Confreres and parishioners alike were drawn closer to Christ through their association with Father Peter as their counselor, mentor, confessor, and friend. His heartfelt concern was always the welfare of others. Neither judgmental nor derogatory in his approach, Father Peter discovered goodness in each individual. He endeared himself to the little children, who loved to gather about him at the altar.

At the time of his death, Father Peter was 86 years old and in the 66th year of his monastic profession, the 60th of his priesthood. He is buried in our cemetery.