

Father Basil Egloff

November 23rd is the anniversary of the death of Father Basil Egloff. Sigmund Egloff was born in Wettingen, Canton Aargau, Switzerland, on April 27, 1865. Following the completion of his elementary and secondary education, he enrolled at Einsiedeln. While pursuing philosophical studies there he learned of the planned expedition to the Benedictine foundation in Arkansas.

Sigmund Egloff was one of the "Eight Beatitudes" who came to the United States and to our monastery in 1887 with the "Great Expedition" from the abbey of Einsiedeln led by Father Gall D'Aujourd'hui.

Sigmund Egloff professed his vows as a monk of our monastery on October 24, 1888, receiving the name Basil. He was ordained to the priesthood by Bishop Edward M. Fitzgerald here at St. Benedict's Priory on November 16, 1890. He was the second monk of our community to be ordained to the priesthood, the first whose ordination took place in our monastery.

Most of Father Basil's priestly life was spent in pastoral work. In August, 1891, he was appointed pastor of St. Joseph's Church in Paris, Arkansas. In November, 1892, he was appointed pastor of St. Mary's Church in Nevada, Missouri, where he served for 19 years. For 10 of these years, he was also the spiritual director at the convent of the Franciscan Sisters in Nevada.

He was recalled to Arkansas in 1911 to become pastor of St. Boniface Church in Fort Smith. During his 15-year pastorate, a large parochial school was constructed as the parish continued to flourish.

In 1925--the year marking his 60th birthday and the 35th of his priesthood--Father Basil spent four months in Europe visiting his boyhood home in Wettingen, Switzerland, and then touring the countries of Switzerland, Italy, Germany, France, and Spain.

Following 35 years of pastoral work, Father Basil returned to the abbey in 1926 to assume his monastic duties as prior and novice master.

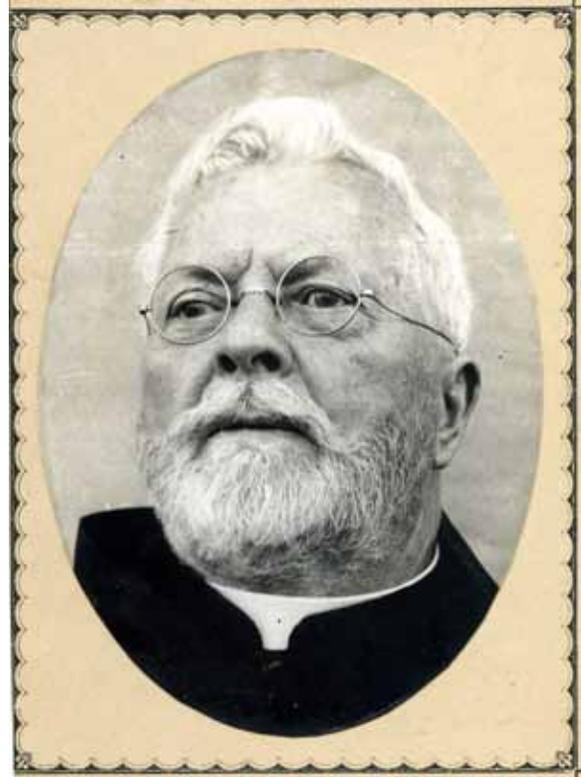
In 1933, he returned to parish work when he received his last official assignment as pastor of St. Scholastica's Church in Shoal Creek, Arkansas. For seven years he served the parish until he suffered a stroke on October 20, 1939, which forced him to relinquish his pastorate and return to the abbey.

Father Basil himself attributed his many years of almost perfect health to a cheerful outlook on life which had its source in childlike faith in the love and providence of God.

It was this cheerful outlook on life that helped support Father Basil in his latter years of suffering. Shortly after returning to Subiaco in retirement in 1939, Father Basil suffered a second stroke. A partial paralysis resulted, and with it, an almost constant pain in his arm that at times was very intense. This condition remained with him the last 12 years of his life.

During these years of sharing in the suffering of Christ, Father Basil marked his diamond sacerdotal jubilee in 1950.

By 1952, Father Basil was in declining health; he became bedridden and completely helpless. Month by month, day by day, he slowly grew weaker. A few days before his death, it became evident that the end was near. On the morning of November 22, 1952, he slipped into a coma.



The community gathered at his bedside and recited the prayers for the dying. Throughout the day his pulse became imperceptible and his breathing was broken by longer and longer intervals. At 1:40 a. m. on Sunday, November 23, 1952, Father Basil died peacefully in the abbey infirmary.

The death of Father Basil marked the end of an era in the history of Subiaco. He was the last of the "Eight Beatitudes," the traditional name given to the eight young men who came to Subiaco from Einsiedeln in 1887.

At that time the monastery was nine years old with only three priests and two novices; its survival was uncertain. But when Father Basil and his companions persevered in their vocation, its permanence was assured.

At the time of his death, Father Basil was 87 years old and in the 64th year of his monastic profession, the 62nd of his priesthood. He is buried in our cemetery.