

Father Augustine Stocker

November 22nd is the anniversary of the death of Father Augustine Stocker. Ambrose Stocker was born on December 7, 1868, in Abtwil, Canton Aargau, Switzerland. Born on the feast of St. Ambrose, he was christened Ambrose. Following his elementary and secondary education in Canton Aargau, he went to Einsiedeln where he completed his college education.

Ambrose Stocker is 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.

Ambrose Stocker professed his vows as a monk of our monastery on October 24, 1888, receiving the name Augustine. He was ordained to the priesthood by Bishop Edward M. Fitzgerald at Subiaco Abbey on December 20, 1891. Father Augustine said his first Mass on the feast of the Epiphany, January 6, 1892.

Following his ordination, he was assistant pastor for three years at the cathedral parish in St. Joseph, Missouri. He then returned to Subiaco where he was appointed subprior of the monastery as well as rector and theology professor in our seminary.

In 1897, Father Augustine was sent to San Anselmo in Rome, Italy, for post-graduate studies in theology. After three years of study he was awarded the degree: Doctor of Divinity. Before returning to the United States, he spent three months as confessor to German, French, and English speaking pilgrims at Lourdes, France.

He returned to Subiaco in November, 1900. He was appointed prior of the monastery in June 1902 – a position he held for 20 years to the very day of his death.

During these years he also served our community as spiritual director of Subiaco College and teacher of philosophy, theology, and ancient and modern languages. He was an accomplished linguist being well acquainted with eight languages. Also an accomplished musician, he taught music and was choirmaster. During these years he also served as dean of the theological faculty of our seminary and fulfilled the role of guestmaster.

Father Augustine also served the Church in the state of Arkansas by his appointments to diocesan posts; namely, diocesan consulter, procurator of the curia, defender of the bond, and censor of books. For 11 years he was also editor of the diocesan newspaper, *The Guardian*, in which over one thousand of his articles were published.

Although he had to retire more and more from college work during the latter years of his life, Father Augustine continued to teach music and languages until his final illness.

In early October, 1922, his health began to fail and he went to Fort Smith, Arkansas, to seek medical help. When treatment after treatment failed to bring relief, he considered seeking an alternative plan for the restoration of his health. Although his condition was considered serious, his sudden death at 4:00 p. m. on Wednesday, November 22, 1922, in Fort Smith, Arkansas, was unexpected.

The body of Father Prior Augustine lay in state in St. Boniface Church, Fort Smith, from Thursday until Sunday afternoon when it was transferred to Subiaco.

At the time of his death, Father Prior Augustine was 53 years old and in the 34th year of his monastic profession, the 30th of his priesthood. He is buried in our cemetery.

