

Father John Vianney Stocker

November 24th is the anniversary of the death of Father John Vianney Stocker. Raymond Stocker was born on January 7, 1904, in Evansville, Indiana. He received his elementary education in southern Indiana and graduated from high school with the class of 1923 from Jasper College in Jasper, Indiana. This school was later moved to Marmion Abbey in Aurora, Illinois.

In his youth, Raymond had been torn between a desire to serve God as a missionary or to enter a religious community. He decided to study for the diocesan priesthood and serve in the recently established diocese of Corpus Christi, Texas.

He entered St. Meinrad Seminary in his home state where he was ordained to the priesthood by Bishop Joseph Chartrand, bishop of Indianapolis, on June 10, 1930.

Following his ordination, Father Stocker was appointed assistant pastor for two years at Corpus Christi Cathedral by the bishop of Corpus Christi. He then served as pastor of the parish in Alice, Texas, for three years. His next pastorate was in Beeville, Texas, where he was assigned for thirteen and a half years.

It was in Beeville that Father Stocker became well acquainted with several priests from Subiaco who came from Corpus Christi Priory, where they were stationed as teachers in the school, to assist him in his parish ministry.

For 21 years, Father Stocker's dream of missionary work was fulfilled as he labored among the Latin American poor in south Texas. By mid-century, 1950, he felt the desire to spend the latter part of his priestly life in a monastic community.

Father Raymond Stocker came to Subiaco on August 30, 1951. As a novice, he followed the same monastic schedule as his fellow-novices who were on an average more than 20 years younger than he. Father Stocker professed his vows as a monk of our monastery on September 14, 1952, receiving the name John Mary Vianney, the patron of parish priests.

After Father Vianney made his vows as a monk, he was assigned to the faculty of our academy and seminary, and he spent his weekends in pastoral work. In 1955, Father Vianney celebrated his silver sacerdotal jubilee.

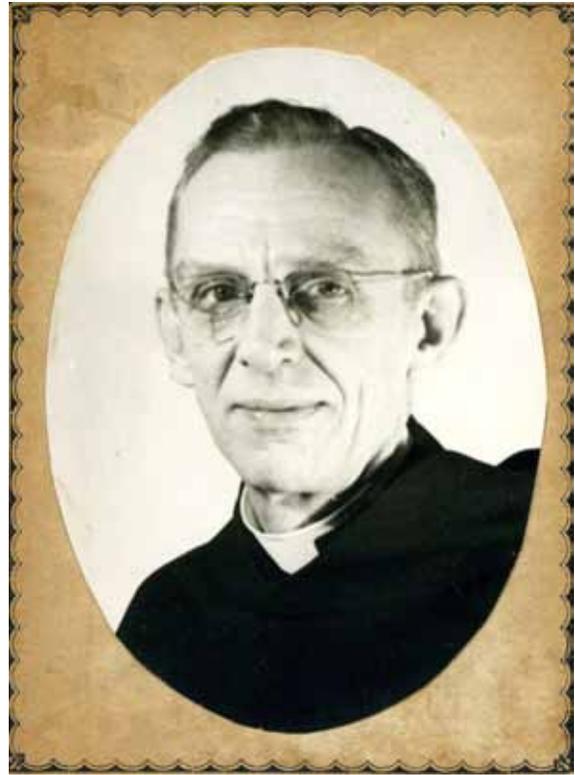
From September of 1955, to August of 1957, he was chaplain at the Tuberculosis Sanitorium in Booneville, Arkansas, and he served the two mission parishes in Ratcliff and Booneville, Arkansas, saying three Masses each Sunday, one at each of the assigned missions.

In the autumn of 1957, after he had fully recovered from surgery in June, Father Vianney was placed in charge of the mission church at Barling, Arkansas. Each Sunday he was to drive there, celebrate Mass and administer the sacraments, then return to the abbey for a full week of teaching in our academy and seminary.

On Sunday morning, November 24, 1957, just a week after taking over this new assignment, Father Vianney was driving to his destination when he began to feel pains in his chest.

When he reached Barling, he found the church still closed. The first place he could find help and aid was in the house of a non-Catholic couple who lived just behind the church.

Shortly afterward, Father John Carbin, a Maryknoll missionary, who was scheduled to speak at Father Vianney's Mass that morning, arrived at the scene. He administered the Last Rites to Father Vianney, who evidently had suffered a heart attack.



Not long after he had been anointed by Father Carbin, Father Vianney suffered a second attack. He died of coronary occlusion in a neighbor's home in Barling, Arkansas, before the Sunday morning services on November 24, 1957.

At the time of his death, Father Vianney was 53 years old and in the 5th year of his monastic profession, the 27th of his priesthood. He is buried in our cemetery.