

Father George Strassner

November 23rd is the anniversary of the death of Father George Strassner. George Strassner was born in Toledo, Ohio, on January 9, 1888. His parents were immigrants from Germany where his Lutheran father had been an organist. His mother was Catholic.

His elementary education was evenly divided between four years in public school and four in the Catholic schools of St. Mary's and St. Anne's in his home-town. He received his secondary and college education at Notre Dame University in South Bend, Indiana, where he enrolled in Holy Cross preparatory seminary from 1906 to 1914.

Graduating from Notre Dame University with the class of 1914, he entered Holy Cross novitiate. George desired to be a missionary in India, but his mother was opposed to his going to a foreign land. Acquiescing to her wishes, he chose instead to serve in the missionary territory of the southern United States.

George withdrew from Holy Cross Seminary in Indiana and entered St. John's Home Mission Seminary in Little Rock, Arkansas, on September 7, 1914, to begin his theological studies. He was ordained to the priesthood for the diocese of Little Rock, Arkansas, by Bishop John B. Morris at St. Andrew's Cathedral in Little Rock on June 2, 1917.

Following ordination, Father Strassner served as secretary to the bishop and was chaplain at St. Vincent's Infirmary during his two-year assignment as a teacher at Little Rock College.

During the years of 1918 and 1919, Father Strassner attended summer school at the University of Illinois studying military tactics and athletic coaching. He was commissioned by the governor of Arkansas as a captain in the Home Guards (now the National Guard), and he organized high school cadets in the Student Army Training Corps at Little Rock College.

In 1919, he was appointed chaplain at St. Michael's Hospital and assistant pastor at Texarkana, Arkansas. From 1920 to 1921, he was the first resident pastor at Weiner, Arkansas, and he taught all eight grades in the elementary parish school. From 1921 to 1925, he was pastor at Jonesboro, Arkansas, and also served as chaplain of St. Bernard Hospital and Holy Angels Convent in Jonesboro.

Father Strassner, who taught at Little Rock College from 1917 to 1919, was recalled to this position from 1925 to 1928. During his five years on the staff, he fulfilled roles of teacher, registrar, and prefect of discipline. He was co-founder of a successful school of pharmacy which was transferred to the University of Arkansas the following year.

He was active in the Student Army Training Corps and he served as principal, athletic director, and coach in the high school department of Little Rock College.

During his second tenure on the staff of Little Rock College, Father Strassner was also a weekend missionary to 14 counties in the western part of the state with headquarters in Hope, Arkansas. By 1928, he was resident pastor at Hope, Arkansas, and remained the caretaker of the surrounding missions for the next eight years.

By 1936, a yearning for life as a Benedictine began to take hold of him. Forty-eight years old, with almost two decades of priestly life and ministry behind him, Father Strassner came to Subiaco where he professed his vows as a monk of our monastery on September 21, 1937, retaining his baptismal name George.



Following his profession, Father George taught in our academy from 1937 to 1939. He was then sent to Texas to teach at Laneri High School in Fort Worth for the 1939-1940 school term. Next, he was sent to south Texas to teach at Corpus Christi Academy for the following 1940-1941 school year.

Recalled to Subiaco, Father George was a teacher at our academy from 1941 to 1944 during which time he also served as chaplain of the Tuberculosis Sanatorium in Booneville, Arkansas.

In 1944, he was appointed the first assistant pastor of St. Joseph's Church in Paris, Arkansas. Along with his parish duties there, he took care of the missions of St. Anthony's in Ratcliff, the Tuberculosis Sanatorium, and the growing congregation in Booneville, Arkansas.

While a teacher in Texas, Father George became especially interested in the apostolate to Latin Americans. In 1945, he returned to Texas as pastor in Waxahachie and its mission in Hillsboro. After two years, he was appointed chaplain at Bethania Hospital in Wichita Falls.

Recalled to Arkansas in 1950, Father George was appointed pastor of Holy Redeemer Church in Clarksville with its mission in Hartman where he served until 1957. During his seven-year pastorate, Father George helped organize a ministerial alliance among the various church leaders.

In 1957, he was appointed the first resident pastor of Our Lady of Assumption Church in Booneville, and chaplain of the Tuberculosis Sanatorium there. During his pastorate in Booneville, Father George celebrated his golden sacerdotal jubilee in 1967.

Failing health caused Father George to retire from active ministry in 1971 at which time he returned to the abbey.

Although Father George had been ill for some time, it was only in the final weeks of his life that he was fully confined to bed in the abbey infirmary. As his condition slowly weakened, and with Abbot Raphael and other confreres at his bedside, Father George died peacefully of apparent cardiac failure at 2:30 p. m. on Tuesday, November 23, 1976.

At the time of his death, Father George was 88 years old and in the 39th year of his monastic profession, the 59th of his priesthood. He is buried in our cemetery.