

Father Victor Gillespie

February 9th is the anniversary of the death of Father Victor Gillespie. Anthony Joseph Gillespie was born March 5, 1928, in Atkins, Arkansas, the youngest of seven children.

Anthony Gillespie attended Assumption Parochial School in his hometown before going to Morris School in Searcy, Arkansas, for his freshman and sophomore years of high school. Brother Cyprian Hill, CFP, who taught for 66 years, said that Anthony Gillespie was the best math student he had ever had in the classroom.

For his junior and senior courses of study, Anthony transferred to Subiaco Academy, graduating with the class of 1945. For one year following graduation he was employed at Subiaco in the Abbey Press before joining the United States Air Force in 1946. Stationed in Japan, Anthony served as a photo lab technician before his honorable discharge in 1948.

Anthony Gillespie returned to Subiaco in 1950 where he professed his vows as a monk on September 14, 1951, receiving the name Victor. He was ordained to the priesthood by Bishop Albert L. Fletcher at the Cathedral of Saint Andrew in Little Rock, Arkansas, on May 26, 1956. "Two religious who greatly influenced my vocation," said Father Victor, "were Brother Cyprian Hill, CFP, of Morris School and Father Christopher Paladino, OSB, of Subiaco Academy."

Apart from his teaching for one semester in 1958 at Laneri High School in Fort Worth, Texas, Father Victor spent a quarter-century teaching in the Subiaco Academy math and physics departments from the late 1950s to 1982.

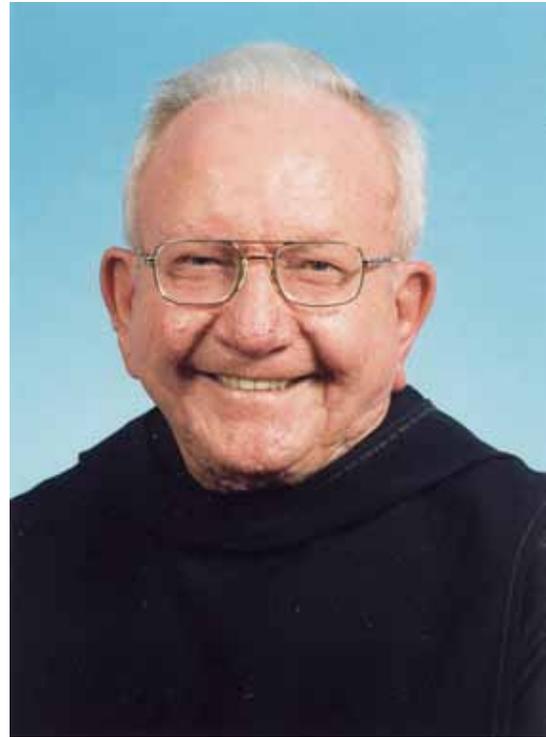
In addition he was the school photographer and gave unstintingly of his time and talent in taking thousands upon thousands of pictures through the years for yearbooks, calendars, ad infinitum: including shooting game films for the coaching staff who always boasted that they had the best in the land.

For many summers, after teaching the academic year in the academy, Father Victor studied in Missouri at St. Louis University earning a B.A. in math and physics in 1961, and then at Peabody College in Nashville, Tennessee, where in 1965 he completed his M.A. in math and physics. He also attended Dominican House of Studies in River Forest, Illinois, and the University of California in Berkeley.

Father Victor was Master of Novices and Formation Director for two years, 1958-60, and thereafter served for one year as assistant vocation director.

In the academy, Father Victor had the expertise of making learning an enjoyable and fascinating experience. High standards of learning set in the classroom were tempered with his friendly and jovial personality; students knew they had an empathetic mentor in Father Victor. He was very proficient in balancing his daytime hours in the classroom with nocturnal photo development in the darkroom.

Later, recalling his career as a photographer/developer, Father Victor said: "That was pretty rough work; sometimes it meant taking 1500 pictures in six months and spending a few hours each night in the darkroom developing them."



Father Victor was an avid sports fan. He once commented that he always read the sports section of the paper first because he wanted to hear about the successes of people before reading of their failures.

Following his years of teaching in the academy, Father Victor received his first permanent pastoral assignment in 1982 when he became assistant pastor of Sacred Heart Parish in Muenster, Texas. In 1989 he was named pastor of Sacred Heart Parish in Muenster which, at that time, was the largest parish staffed by the Benedictines of Subiaco Abbey.

Father Victor was recalled to Arkansas in 1994 to become pastor of Holy Redeemer Parish in Clarksville, where he directed the renovation and expansion of the church. Following this he received his last pastoral assignment in 1999, namely pastor of St. Benedict Parish in Subiaco, a position that he held until 2005, when he was diagnosed with lung cancer and retired to the Abbey Health Center, where he was residing at the time of his death.

“I have never regretted making my religious vows,” said Father Victor. “Sometimes religious life is difficult, but there are always friends and classmates to support you and share your burdens. There’s nothing quite like community living.” He is buried in our cemetery.