

## Father Martin Fleig

March 31st is the anniversary of the death of Father Martin Fleig. Peter Fleig was born in Switzerland on May 22, 1862. He came to the United States and to our monastery with the "Expedition" of 1885 from the abbey of Einsiedeln led by Father Wolfgang Schlumpf.

In this "Expedition" there were two priests, one brother, four brother-candidates, and one candidate for the priesthood; namely, Peter Fleig.

There were also several Sisters destined for the Oregon mission traveling with the group aboard the Red Star Liner "Westernland," sailing from Antwerp, Belgium, to New York.

The arrival of Peter Fleig began a new era in vocations because he was the first young man to enter our community as a choir novice, i.e., a candidate for the priesthood.

On the feast of St. Benedict, March 21, 1888, Peter Fleig and classmate Henry Kraemer professed their vows as monks of our monastery. They were the first fratres in the history of our monastery. In honor of the first two abbots of St. Meinrad, these two young monks received the names Frater Martin Fleig and Frater Fintan Kraemer.

Frater Martin Fleig was ordained to the priesthood by Bishop Edward M. Fitzgerald here at the abbey on December 20, 1891.

Father Martin served our community in the pastoral ministry as assistant pastor at St. Edward's Church in Little Rock before his appointment on April 27, 1897, as pastor of Sts. Peter and Paul Church in Morrison Bluff.

A major task facing Father Martin's early pastorate was the need to house the Sisters properly because the old school house in which they were living was beyond repair. The parish decided to build a new rectory and in turn use the present rectory as the Sisters' living quarters. By November of 1897, the building project was completed.

In 1898 the parish had the honor, for the first time in its history, to host the State Convention of the Central Catholic Union. In 1906 the parish celebrated the 25th anniversary of the dedication of their parish church. Over 200 times during these 25 years the church bells had tolled for deceased parishioners, many falling victim to malaria fever. Three large church bells totaling 3,311 pounds, were purchased to commemorate the silver jubilee of the church.

By 1912 there were 80 families in the parish and the frame church built in 1881, and enlarged several years later, was now too small for this ever-growing parish.

Plans were drawn for a new church by Father Justin Wewer, the first native priest of Sts. Peter and Paul Parish. In 1918, the new church—built of red brick, in Gothic style with Gothic altars—was dedicated by Bishop John B. Morris. The old church building was converted into a community hall and school.

Father Martin lived to celebrate his silver sacerdotal jubilee on January 24, 1917, and to witness the dedication of the new church in 1918.

