

## Father Leo Koesler

August 1st is the anniversary of the death of Father Leo Koesler. Joseph Koesler was born in Lindsay, Texas, on March 24, 1921. He received his elementary education at St. Peter's School in his hometown. He came to Subiaco Academy for his high school studies, graduating with the class of 1939.

Joseph Koesler professed his vows as a monk of our monastery on September 14, 1941, receiving the name Leo. He was ordained to the priesthood by Bishop Albert L. Fletcher at St. Andrew's Cathedral in Little Rock on June 15, 1946.

From 1946 to 1948, Father Leo was on the faculty of the academy. He then studied at the Catholic University of America, Washington, DC, from 1948 to 1951, where he received the degree of Doctor of Canon Law.

During the 1950s, Father Leo held several positions in academy and abbey administration, including faculty member of both the academy and college, subprior of the abbey, novicemaster, instructor of clerics, seminary professor, Brother novicemaster, and archivist.

Continuing positions of seminary professor and Brother novicemaster in the early 1960s, Father Leo also served as press administrator, seminary rector, and chapter secretary. In 1966, he assumed duties as rector of the theology department and continued as seminary instructor and assistant novicemaster.

From 1967 to 1970, Father Leo was superior of Subiaco's House of Studies in St. Louis, Missouri. Returning to Subiaco in 1970, he became retreatmaster and academy faculty member, and in 1971 was an original founding member and first superior of the abbey's new mission foundation, Santa Familia Monastery in Belize, Central America.

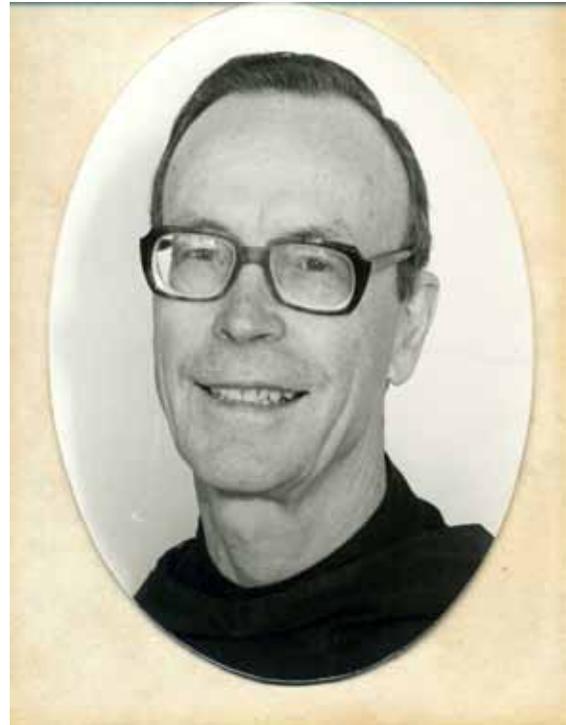
Returning to the abbey in 1972, Father Leo did substitute work as needed, and was appointed Oblate director and pastor of Our Lady of the Assumption Church in Booneville, Arkansas, in 1973, while continuing as an academy faculty member for several years.

For the last 25 years of his life, Father Leo was haunted by an illness of the most dispiriting kind: clinical depression, an emotional/mental sickness causing several hospitalizations. Plagued by doubts and fears it was demoralizing, humiliating, draining hope for someone who had given so generously of his talents and energy in the service of his community for the first half of his monastic life.

Daily haunted by his mental instability, not knowing when his chemical imbalance would trip him into depression or when he would be desperate with doubts, Father Leo remained faithful to his prayer life and was able to work well for some years as a pastor and teacher.

In 1988, Father Leo resigned his active ministries due to illness and took up residence in the monastic infirmary, where he evidenced heroic patience and kindness in the face of his diminishments: when his capabilities and control were taken away, he went on, accepting humiliation, darkness, distress; on good days bracing himself for the bad; on bad days hoping desperately for relief, without giving up but holding faithfully to his commitment made to God on his profession day.

Years of declining health, cancer of the lung, congestive heart failure, and bouts of pneumonia ebbed away at his stamina during the final months of his life, and Father Leo died peacefully during the early morning of Friday, August 1, 1997, in the monastic Health Center, strengthened with the sacraments and the prayers of the community.



On Monday, August 4, Abbot Jerome Kodell was celebrant and homilist at the 10:00 a.m. Mass of Christian burial and performed the final obsequies.

At the time of his death, Father Leo was 76 years old and in the 55th year of his monastic profession, the 51st of his priesthood. He is buried in our cemetery.