

Brother Francis Morat

August 27th is the anniversary of the death of Brother Francis Morat. Joseph Morat was born on March 15, 1874, in Bonndorf, Germany. He was the only boy in the family, and he worked on his father's small farm and attended the local school until he was 16 years old.

He and his parents then decided that he should learn a trade. Joseph wanted to be a tailor so he spent two years learning this craft, and after completing his apprenticeship, he worked in a fashionable shop. At this time he was also considering entering the Benedictine monastery at Einsiedeln, and he was on their waiting list until room would be available.

In 1893, however, he learned that there was a Benedictine priest from Arkansas visiting at Einsiedeln so he went to talk to him, and five days later when Father Matthew Saettele sailed for the United States, Joseph Morat was with him. They arrived in New York on April 29, and reached their destination of Subiaco Abbey on May 4. Joseph Morat professed his vows as a monk of our monastery on March 21, 1895, receiving the name Francis.

Although Brother Frank, as he was known, eventually served God for 65 years as a monk of our abbey--strong, robust, and hardworking--an illness threatened his life shortly after his profession; he was at death's door. Another monk who had made profession with him, Brother Bruno, was also deathly ill at this time. The doctor had given up all hope for either of them, and the abbey carpenter was given orders to make two coffins. However, to the joy of all, both brothers proved the experts wrong and recovered.

Although Brother Frank was a tailor by trade, when he arrived at Subiaco, the abbey already had a tailor so he was assigned to the kitchen. He said that his cooking was one of the many trials that the young monastery had to endure.

Twice he saw the abbey in ashes and twice he helped to rebuild it. Brother Francis served our community for many years in a variety of ways: in the kitchen, on the farm, in construction, and later as tailor, and porter. In 1934, he was one of the monks who worked on the construction and landscaping of the new monastic cemetery on the northeast side of the abbey. After its completion, Brother Francis was its principal caretaker.

In 1955, Brother Francis celebrated his diamond jubilee of monastic profession. After a long illness, Brother Francis died in the abbey infirmary on the evening of Saturday, August 27, 1960. At the time of his death, he was the senior monk in number of years in monastic profession.

At the time of his death, Brother Francis was 86 years old and in the 65th year of his monastic profession. He is buried in our cemetery.

