

## Father Justin Wewer

September 3rd is the anniversary of the death of Father Justin Wewer. Henry Wewer was born on August 10, 1872, in Weseke, in the federal state of Northrhine-Westfalia, Germany. He attended school in his hometown until he and his family moved to the United States, arriving on November 3, 1891, and settling in Morrison Bluff, Arkansas, 15 miles from Subiaco, where young Henry continued farming with his family.

Gradually the appeal of the nearby monastery began to take hold of Henry Wewer, and on September 15, 1896, he came to Subiaco to begin his secondary education at the age of 24, joining classmates who were 10 years his junior. He professed his vows as a monk of our monastery on October 16, 1900, receiving the name Justin. He was ordained to the priesthood at Subiaco Abbey by Bishop John Janssen of Belleville, Illinois, on June 25, 1904.

As a candidate, novice, and frater, he had helped in the quarrying of stone and the first stages in the building of the abbey, which was beginning to rise in stone at its present site. Following his ordination, Father Justin kept up his interest in this construction while serving as a prefect and teacher in our school, and by 1908 construction work received his full attention. Thereafter, until the monastery was completed in 1917, he continued as builder, moving from apprentice to master.

In 1917, Father Justin was appointed pastor of Holy Family Church in Nazareth, Texas, remaining there for 10 years--his only parochial assignment. A disastrous fire recalled him to his previous task at the abbey. As flames swept through the quadrangle on the evening of December 20, 1927, the monastery was virtually destroyed. The following dawn showed heaps of rubble where two-thirds of the monastery had been, and the remaining part stood tottering and gutted. For five years he devoted himself fully to this reconstruction.

In 1932, Father Justin became master of novices and director of the clerics, a position he held until 1938. With the construction of Jewett Hall, the East Annex of the abbey, which began in 1939, Father Justin went back to full-time construction work for two more years. Thereafter, he remained on the faculty of the academy until 1947, when he went to St. Anthony's Hospital in Morrilton, Arkansas, as chaplain and plant supervisor. In 1954 Father Justin celebrated his golden sacerdotal jubilee.

He retired as chaplain in 1956 but remained in residence at the hospital. In 1960, Father Justin celebrated his 60th anniversary of monastic profession. He returned to the abbey in 1962 where, until his final illness, he was able to walk the abbey grounds and to take his meals with the monastic community.

In mid-August of 1963, Father Justin was taken to the hospital, suffering from a heart condition and feebleness due to old age. He died while reciting the psalms in his breviary on Tuesday, September 3, 1963, in Crawford County Memorial Hospital in Van Buren, Arkansas.

At the time of his death, Father Justin was 91 years old and in the 62nd year of his monastic profession, the 59th of his priesthood. He is buried in our cemetery.

