

## Father Damian Wewers

August 16th is the anniversary of the death of Father Damian Wewers. Herman Wewers was born September 26, 1912, in Morrison Bluff, Arkansas. He received his elementary education at Sts. Peter and Paul grade school in that community and in the autumn of 1926 he entered Subiaco Academy, graduating with the class of 1930.

His older brother, Father Raymond Wewers, had entered the abbey earlier and Herman Wewers joined him, professing his vows as a monk of our community on September 15, 1931, receiving the name Damian. He was ordained to the priesthood by Bishop John B. Morris at St. Andrew's Cathedral in Little Rock on May 22, 1937.

Following ordination, Father Damian was on the faculty of our academy until 1944. He then served as assistant pastor of St. Edward's Church in Little Rock, Arkansas, until 1950.

For the next 38 years Father Damian worked in our Texas apostolates: first in north Texas as assistant pastor of St. Mary's Church in Fort Worth and faculty member of Laneri High School in the same city. Three years later he was appointed pastor of St. Mary's.

In 1957 he was assigned to south Texas, serving as pastor of St. Theresa's Church in Corpus Christi. He returned to north Texas in 1960 for a one-year pastorate of St. Peter's Church in Lindsay.

He was then appointed once again the pastor of St. Mary's Church in Fort Worth. During his eight-year pastorate he also served for one year (1962-1963) as the religious superior of all the Subiaco monks assigned to the parish and to Laneri High School.

When "The bells of Saint Mary" ring out, it's a tribute to the determination of Father Damian. When he was first assigned to St. Mary's Church as assistant pastor, he felt that St. Mary's bell tower—without bells—certainly needed church bells. Later, when he became pastor, he learned that the church bells from the old Sacred Heart Church in Muenster, Texas, would not be used in their new semi-Gothic church being built.

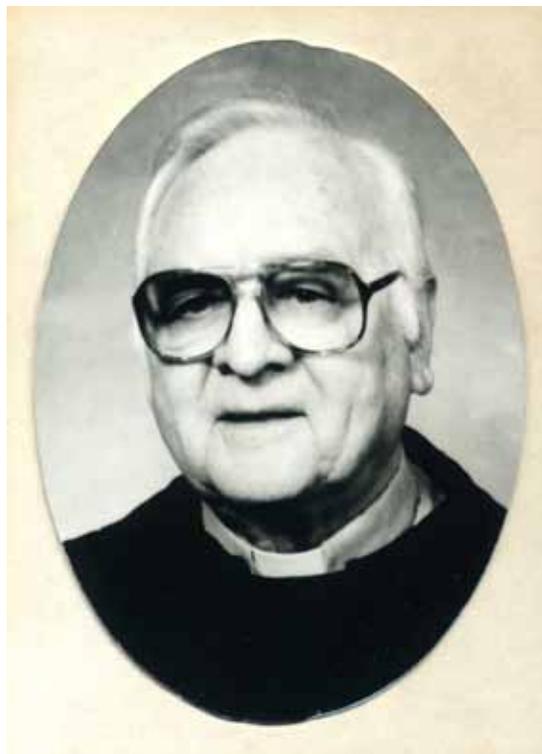
The church bells were trucked from Muenster to a warehouse in Fort Worth; then, a problem arose: because the bells were not crated, no trucker would agree to haul them through the city streets of Fort Worth. Father Damian was undeterred; he engaged a wrecker truck and driver. One bell at a time was hoisted like a wrecked automobile and delivered across freeways and city thoroughfares to the church. Riding on the back of the truck, Father Damian held each bell in transit to keep it from swinging.

In 1962, when Father Damian celebrated his silver sacerdotal jubilee, the beautiful tone of his bells pealed from the church tower, adding to the solemnity of the occasion.

In 1969 he returned to Lindsay where he served as pastor of St. Peter's Church for the next nine years. He then returned to Arkansas where he was appointed pastor of Holy Redeemer Church in Clarksville. He served in this capacity from 1978 to 1983. Due to failing health, Father Damian retired from pastoral ministry, returning to the abbey.

He remained active until his health condition confined him to the abbey infirmary. For several years he prayed the Divine Office with the other monks living there.

He marked both—his golden jubilee and his diamond jubilee of religious profession and ordination—while living in the monastic Health Center.



For the final three years of his life, Father Damian was bedfast. Until the final year of Father Damian's life, the ambulatory monks living in the monastic Health Center gathered in his room to pray the Divine Office.

Following years of declining health, Father Damian died of congestive heart failure in the monastic Health Center at 10:45 p.m. on Monday, August 16, 1999, strengthened with the sacraments and the prayers of his brother monks.

On Thursday, August 19, Abbot Jerome Kodell was celebrant and homilist for the 10:00 a.m. Mass of Christian burial and performed the final obsequies. Bishop Andrew J. McDonald, who was present in the sanctuary, performed the absolution.

At the time of his death, Father Damian was 86 years old and in the 67th year of his monastic profession, the 62nd of his priesthood. He is buried in our cemetery.