

Oblate Herman Joseph Wibberding

August 20th is the anniversary of the death of Oblate Herman Joseph Wibberding. He was born in Europe on September 24, 1885, and made his oblation as a member of our community on April 24, 1910, receiving the name Herman Joseph. Although Brother Herman had only one hand, he faithfully served our community for 13 years.

Brother Herman contributed a vital part to the celebration of the Sunday liturgy. During the early 1900s, the bellows of the abbey's pipe organ were operated by hand. On weekdays it was the seminarians' duty to pump the organ during services. However, on Sundays, it was the assigned duty of Brother Herman to pump the organ, a work that he masterfully performed with only one hand.

Brother Herman's major work was in the powerhouse. It was there that his fatal accident occurred on Monday, August 20, 1923, while he was assisting with improvements which were being made in the heating system of the building.

At 7:00 a.m., he climbed with two other workmen into the loft of the powerhouse in order to remove some of the heating pipes. A few minutes later he missed his footing and fell through the thin ceiling onto the concrete floor below.

The result of the fall caused Brother Herman to strike his head against the base of a concrete frame on which the old dynamo, then removed, had been supported. The impact of the accident resulted in critical head injuries which rendered Brother Herman unconscious.

His fellow workmen carried him to the infirmary where he received all possible medical assistance from Dr. Allen. But the irreparable damage could not be reversed, and Brother Herman died two hours later with his confreres surrounding his bedside.

At the time of his death, Brother Herman Joseph was 37 years old and in the 13th year of his claustral oblation. He is buried in our cemetery.

