

## Brother Norbert Zwyszig

October 2nd is the anniversary of the death of Brother Norbert Zwyszig. Joseph Zwyszig was born in Gersau, Canton Schwyz, Switzerland, on June 25, 1895. After two years of primary school under the Sisters of the Holy Cross, Joseph went to work at the age of 13 in a silk factory in his home-town.

A year later, the attraction of monastic life began to draw him. Too young to apply for admittance as a monk, he went to Einsiedeln abbey at age 14 to work until he should be old enough to enter. There, while working in the abbey kitchen, he became acquainted with Brother Meinrad Eugster, a diabetic monk who came regularly to receive his dietary meals in the kitchen. Brother Meinrad is now being proposed for canonization.

Reaching his mid-teens, and impressed by the Benedictine life at Einsiedeln, Joseph Zwyszig asked to be admitted as a candidate. The superiors suggested that he consider joining the community at Subiaco.

Three men from Gersau, Switzerland, had already come to Subiaco via Einsiedeln; namely: Brother Gabriel Riegert, Father John Nigg, and Brother Andrew Zwyszig, the uncle of Joseph Zwyszig. At the age of 16, Joseph decided to join them.

He came to the United States, arriving at Subiaco on November 11, 1911, or "eleven-eleven-eleven" as he liked to say it.

Still too young to take religious vows, Joseph spent three years as a candidate and one year as a novice. He was still underage for profession and it was necessary for him to obtain a dispensation in order to make his vows. Joseph Zwyszig professed his vows as a monk of our monastery on June 24, 1915, one day before his 20th birthday, receiving the name Norbert.

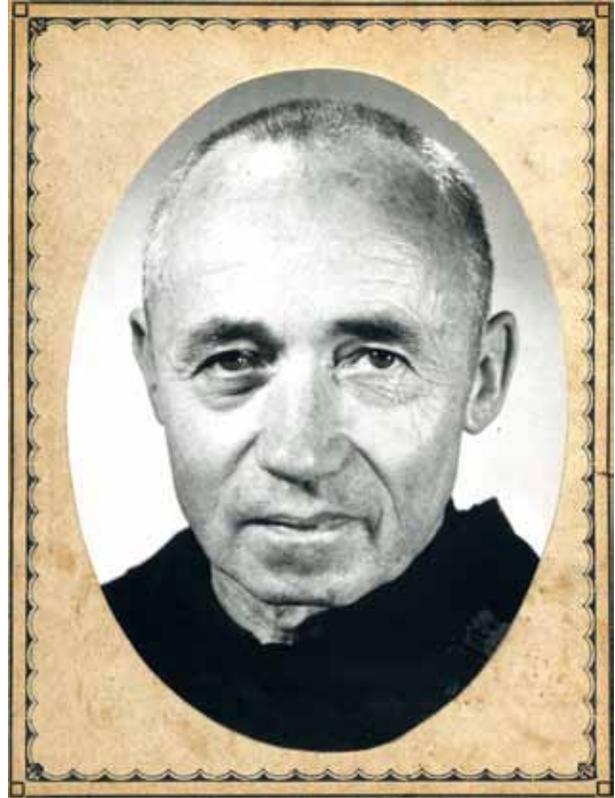
Having served in the kitchen at Einsiedeln, it was natural that Brother Norbert's first assignment at Subiaco would be in the dining room from 1912 to 1916. From 1916 to 1926 he worked in mechanics, electricity, and maintenance; firing the boilers and caring for the generators and dynamo. His next assignment was to work in the laundry until he was sent to Texas.

In 1934, he joined Father Paul Nahlen and other monks at the Subiaco foundation in Corpus Christi, Texas. Here he cared for the orchard and lawns, and during his 12 year tenure, this son of the Swiss Alps and Arkansas hills, never lost the thrill of the Gulf of Mexico which brought back memories of Lake Luzern in his native Switzerland.

But needs at Subiaco caused his recall, and he returned here in 1946 to again work in the laundry and soon to assume charge of its operation, where he served for the next three decades, until a few months before his death. His advanced age and some previous ill health did not keep him from continuing to run the big ancient washers in the laundry and maintain the equally ancient steam engine that powered them.

Brother Norbert was a gentle person, quiet and soft-spoken. From boyhood on, he had a special interest in classical music, listening to and reading about the great composers and their works.

Brother Norbert celebrated his golden jubilee of monastic profession in 1965 at which time he traveled to Switzerland to visit the homeland he had not seen since 1911. In 1975, he celebrated his diamond jubilee of monastic profession.



Brother Norbert was the last survivor among the many monks who had come to Subiaco through Maria Einsiedeln Abbey in Switzerland, and in a way his death brought to a close the first century of Subiaco's history. At the beginning of our abbey's history its monks came from the founding abbey, St. Meinrad in Indiana, and especially from Einsiedeln in Switzerland.

Brother Norbert died of cancer on Monday, October 2, 1978, at St. Edward Mercy Medical Center in Fort Smith, where he had been a patient for about a month.

At the time of his death, Brother Norbert was 83 years old and in the 63rd year of his monastic profession. He is buried in our cemetery.