

## Father Aaron Pirrera

September 18th is the anniversary of the death of Father Aaron Pirrera. Charles Pirrera was born August 7, 1944, in Chicago, Illinois, one of two children of Carl and Mary Midiri Pirrera. His parents and his sister Rosemary preceded him in death. The Pirrera family resided in Springfield, Illinois, where Charles received both his elementary and secondary education. He attended Sts. Peter and Paul Elementary School, graduating in 1958, and Bishop Griffin High School, graduating with the Class of 1962.

From 1962 to 1966, Charles attended St. Ambrose College in Davenport, Iowa, where he received a Bachelor of Arts Degree in English and French. After graduation from St. Ambrose, Charles joined the Peace Corps as a volunteer teacher, librarian, and English language tutor to college graduates in Asmara, Ethiopia, from 1966 to 1968.

Upon returning to the United States, Charles worked as a teacher and librarian at schools in Elwood and later Davenport, Iowa, through 1978. He received his Master's Degree in Library Science from the University of Iowa in 1973. Before his entry to Subiaco Abbey in 1978, Charles was working as librarian at Black Hawk Junior College in Moline, Illinois.

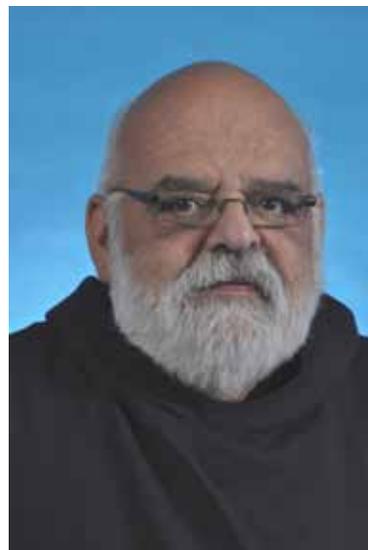
Charles began thinking about a religious vocation and visited various communities. He said that at Subiaco Abbey he experienced "a sense of fulfillment" and "coming home," which confirmed what he felt was the Lord's desiring something more for him than the life of a teacher, graduate student, and bachelor.

Charles Pirrera made his first profession of vows on February 10, 1980, receiving the name Aaron. Brother Aaron taught English, religion, and served as librarian in Subiaco Academy during the 1980-1981 school year. In May 1981, Brother Aaron was assigned to Beda College in Rome to begin his studies for the priesthood. He professed his final vows as a monk of our monastery on September 14, 1983, and was ordained to the priesthood at Subiaco Abbey by Bishop Andrew McDonald of Little Rock on August 10, 1985.

Following Father Aaron's ordination, Abbot Raphael De Salvo, OSB, appointed him Director of Vocations, a ministry Father Aaron served in until 1997. While Vocations Director, Father Aaron also served as Director of Formation (1987-1990), Retreat Director of the Abbey Guest House (Courty House; 1990-1996), and Director of Development (1996-1999).

Following his service as Development Director, Abbot Jerome Kodell, OSB, assigned Father Aaron to work in our Academy. After receiving certification in ESL from the University of California at San Diego in the summer 1999, Father Aaron served as teacher and chair of the Academy's English department (1999-2001) and as Headmaster (2001-2005). During his ministry to the Academy, Father Aaron revived both the Academy's ESL program and Quiz Bowl team, and received his Master of Education Degree from Harding University, Searcy, Arkansas.

Father Aaron was appointed by Abbot Jerome to replace Father Victor Gillespie, who had been diagnosed with cancer, as the Pastor of St. Benedict Parish, Subiaco, in 2005. In the summer of 2011, when Father Hilary Filiatreau, OSB, retired as Pastor of St. Mary Parish in Altus, Father Aaron was appointed Pastor of St. Mary in addition to St. Benedict. He cared for St. Mary Parish for about one year. As in his other ministries as a Benedictine monk and priest, Father Aaron brought vivacity, generous compassion and understanding, and a great sense of humor. Each of these qualities of character were rooted in and reflected in Father Aaron's love for the Church and the people of God, while at the same time endearing him to his parishioners, confreres, and friends, as well as benefactors and guests of the Abbey.



Early in the year 2016 Father Aaron began to experience worsening problems with diabetes and became a part-time resident in the Abbey Health Center, while remaining pastor of St. Benedict Parish. By late May his health had further deteriorated and he was relieved of his pastoral responsibilities and became a permanent resident in the Abbey Health Center, where he was residing at the time of his death.

Abbot Leonard Wangler was celebrant and homilist at the 10:00 a.m. Mass of Christian burial and performed the obsequies on Wednesday, September 21.

At the time of his death, Father Aaron was 72 years old and in the 36th year of his monastic profession, the 31st of his priesthood. He is buried in our cemetery.