

## Brother Hilary Benetz

October 16th is the anniversary of the death of Brother Hilary Benetz. Fridolin Benetz was born on March 6, 1854, in Durbach, Germany. He professed his vows as a monk of St. Meinrad Abbey on July 16, 1873, receiving the name Hilary.

With his black beard, and his musical talent for singing, Brother Hilary had a jovial personality with a sparkling twinkle in his eye.

After profession, Brother Hilary served his community of St. Meinrad for five years as caretaker of the abbey's wine cellar. He was then assigned to Logan County, Arkansas, where the Benedictines of St. Meinrad were to make a foundation.

On Ash Wednesday, March 6, 1878, Brother Hilary, along with Father Wolfgang Schlumpf and Brother Caspar Hildesheim, began their 700-mile journey from St. Meinrad to Logan County, Arkansas, riding on the driver's seat of a farm wagon drawn by two mules.

When the trio arrived at the place of the new foundation at six o'clock in the evening on Friday, March 15, 1878, they found a primitive and neglected log cabin with one room, 16 by 16 feet, lit during the day by a window with six small panes, and illumined at night by moonlight shining through countless holes and cracks in the roof and walls.

The three monks entered the cabin as Father Wolfgang intoned the blessing: "Peace to this house." With its location in the foothills of the Ouachita Mountains, the cabin was called St. Benedict monastery.

Within two and a half months after their arrival, the three intrepid pioneer-monks, along with local helpers, had built a log church, 24 by 60 feet with a tower about 50 feet high.

On Sunday, May 26, 1878, Bishop Edward M. Fitzgerald of Little Rock dedicated the log church and celebrated Mass with Brother Hilary and a school teacher forming the choir.

Brother Hilary served our community during the first two years of its founding. He was recalled to St. Meinrad Abbey in early 1880 where he continued to serve his community for the next 26 years.

On Tuesday, October 16, 1906, Brother Hilary died in Jeffersonville, Indiana. At the time of his death, he was 52 years old and in the 33rd year of his monastic profession. He is buried at St. Meinrad Archabbey in Indiana.

