

Father Gregory Luthiger

June 9th is the anniversary of the death of Father Gregory Luthiger. Franz Luthiger was born in the town of Zug, Canton Zug, Switzerland, on December 8, 1866. He attended the Abbey School at Einsiedeln. He was one of the "Eight Beatitudes" who came to the United States and to St. Benedict's Priory in 1887 with the "Great Expedition" from the abbey of Einsiedeln led by Father Gall D'Aujourd'hui.

Franz Luthiger professed his vows as a monk of our monastery on October 24, 1888, receiving the name Gregory. In the fall of 1890, it was decided to send Frater Gregory to the Catholic University of America in Washington, D. C. The preliminary arrangements were made and Father Messmer of the university advised to have the student ordained before beginning his studies in Washington, D. C.

Frater Gregory was ordained to the priesthood by Bishop Edward M. Fitzgerald at St. Andrew's Cathedral in Little Rock on October 30, 1890, the first priest to be ordained for our community.

Father Gall, who had accompanied Frater Gregory to Little Rock for the ordination, described their return trip:

"About 6:00 p.m. we arrived at the first house in Saint Benedict's parish, where we were greeted by gunshots fired to salute us. The shots followed us from every house we passed. You can imagine how happy the members of the monastery were when I brought our first priest home. They had heard the shots being fired all along the road and were ready to welcome us. Father Gregory and I could not hold back our tears and most of the monks and parishioners wept as we drove up."

Immediately after ordination and first Mass, Father Gregory was sent to the Catholic University of America to complete his theological studies. It was decided that he would earn a licentiate and doctorate in practical theology before returning to Subiaco.

However, by the autumn of 1891, the health of this young priest was in such poor condition that it was thought the removal to his native Switzerland was necessary for his recovery. Shortly before his departure for Europe, Father Gregory sent to Subiaco the diploma of his baccalaureate in theology.

The change in location and in climate did not make a change in his health, and he died in his native Switzerland on Thursday, June 9, 1892, without becoming the trained schoolman so needed by the priory in its educational work.

At the time of his death, Father Gregory was 25 years old and in the 3rd year of his monastic profession. He had been a priest for 19 MONTHS. He is buried at the Abbey of Maria Einsiedeln in Switzerland.

