

Brother Joseph Kaiser

July 30th is the anniversary of the death of Brother Joseph Kaiser. Emil Kaiser was born on June 11, 1866, in Freiburg, Germany. When he was 23 years old he came to the United States and to our monastery with the "Expedition" of 1889 from the abbey of Einsiedeln led by Father Pius Zwysig.

In this "Expedition" which arrived at St. Benedict's Priory in Arkansas on October 6, there were two priests and six students of whom four were candidates for the priesthood and two were candidates for the brotherhood. Of the candidates, four persevered, one being brother-candidate Emil Kaiser who professed his vows as a monk of our monastery on Christmas Day, 1891, receiving the name Joseph.

Brother Joseph served our community for many years as refectorian, janitor, and barber. He was not only barber for the monastery, but also for the students. At that time the students received one haircut each semester. One was given between September and Christmas, while the other was between Christmas and June. Father Leo Gerschwyler, prefect of the school, would tell him: "Cut 'em short."

On July 29, 1930, when the grapes were being picked in the old vineyard on the west side of the monastery, Brother Joseph volunteered to assist with the grape harvest. However, he was never seen outside with a hat, and he spent all morning in the vineyard under the hot sun without protection. At noon he returned to his room in the monastery.

The next morning, as a group of monks met him going downstairs for a drink of water, they asked him how he felt. "Just awful," he replied. The doctor was summoned and Brother Joseph was found to have 107 temperature.

Brother Joseph died at the abbey at 3:55 p.m. on Wednesday, July 30, 1930, as a result of a sunstroke suffered in the vineyard the day before.

At the time of his death, Brother Joseph was 64 years old and in the 38th year of his monastic profession. He is buried in our cemetery.

