

Father Justin Huwyler

September 15th is the anniversary of the death of Father Justin Huwyler. Joseph Burkhard Huwyler was born in Reu-begg, Canton Aargau, Switzerland, on December 24, 1862. He professed his vows as a monk of the Abbey of Maria Einsiedeln on April 9, 1885, receiving the name Justin. He was ordained to the priesthood on August 26, 1888.

Following his ordination, Father Justin came to the United States and to our monastery as the leader of the "Expedition" of 1888 from Einsiedeln, bringing five prospective candidates with him.

Upon arrival at St. Benedict's Priory on October 22, Father Justin served our community as professor of philosophy in our seminary. Also, he was appointed instructor of the brothers in our monastery. Father Justin, himself, was the son of a well-to-do farmer near Sins, Switzerland; he understood the needs of those who are engaged in farming, and he had a great love for horses.

From 1889, while residing at the abbey, Father Justin was the itinerant pastor of the congregation at Morrison Bluff, Arkansas. He was a man dedicated to the service of others and he permitted nothing to hinder him in his work for God. He swam streams in winter and summer to visit his large flock, which numbered more sick and dying than any of the other missions.

The young priest was enjoying robust health, and he had the church enlarged and a rectory built in Morrison Bluff. His desire to become resident pastor of this congregation became a reality in the spring of 1895, the same year when his health was broken by "lowland fever." His powerful frame resisted the first attack, but he suffered a relapse.

Fortified by the rites of the Church administered to him by Father Prior Gall D'Aujourd'hui, and cared for by Brother Benedict Bulle, Father Justin died on Sunday, September 15, 1895, of malarial fever or "lowland fever" as it was also called.

On the same evening, his remains were laid to rest at Subiaco with Father Prior Gall D'Aujourd'hui delivering a short eulogy as community members gathered for the burial of their fifth confrere. Almost the entire congregation of Morrison Bluff was also present for the funeral of this young priest.

At the time of his death, Father Justin was 32 years old and in the 10th year of his monastic profession, the 7th of his priesthood. He is buried in our cemetery.

