

## Father David McKillin

November 24th is the anniversary of the death of Father David McKillin.

Robert Henry McKillin was born April 14, 1929, in St. Louis, Missouri. During the Great Depression, Robert's parents suffered significant financial losses so they moved from St. Louis to the family farm near Old Mines, Missouri, where he attended Racola Elementary School. When he was ready to begin his secondary education, the family moved back to St. Louis where he attended the parish high school of St. Michael, and then transferred to the archdiocesan high school De Andries and graduated with the class of 1948.

He attended St. Louis University before his entry into the United States Armed Forces, serving in Korea from 1951-53. Returning to civilian life, he completed a B.S. degree at St. Louis University and later worked in St. Louis as a supervisor at the National Lead Company.

"The first promptings toward monastic life began as a small child on the front porch of my maternal grandparents' home," he said. "In the summer evenings after everything was finished and before bedtime, my grandparents and extended family from the neighborhood would gather on the front porch to visit. There I listened to the family elders talk about a distant cousin who became a Trappist monk and whose prayers, according to family tradition, were always answered. The respect and awe in their conversation about him prompted me one evening to announce that when I grew up I would be a monk."

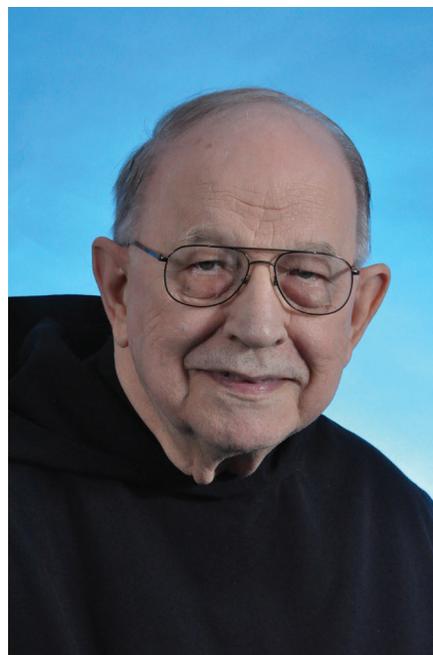
Drawn to a religious vocation in the Benedictine way of life, Robert McKillin entered St. Pius X Monastery in Pevely, Missouri, where he professed his vows as a monk on December 8, 1959, receiving the name David. By 1974, he chose to take another step in monastic life and studied at Notre Dame Seminary in New Orleans, Louisiana, where he received an M.A. degree in theology. He was ordained to the priesthood by the Most Reverend Charles R. Koster, auxiliary bishop of St. Louis on May 24, 1976, in Sacred Heart Church, Festus, Missouri.

Later Pius X Abbey relocated to the diocese of Jefferson City in Columbia, Missouri. For three decades Father David served his community as director of development, treasurer, Business manager, vocation director, novice master/formation director, subprior and prior. Also, he was in demand as a retreat master and spiritual director at other religious houses.

In the latter 1980s, when St. Pius X Abbey was no longer able to function as a viable institution, Father David served as Prior-Administrator until its closure. Thus, in 1990 he transferred his Benedictine vow of stability to Subiaco Abbey.

"I have enjoyed being a monk even though my life has taken many unexpected and difficult 'turns.' I came to monastic life expecting a very quiet life," he said. "While some of that inner 'quiet' has always been there, still, in one instance I was responsible for the closing of a monastery and the relocation of its monks. While that wasn't very 'quiet' I did grow spiritually from the experience," he confided.

Father David's assignments in Arkansas were almost identical to those he previously had in Missouri. He served as treasurer, business manager, subprior, director of the Abbey Health center, development director, as well as devoting his time and expertise to spiritual direction and retreat work.



In the autumn of 1999 Father David attended Tantor Theological Institute in Jerusalem, Israel, for a three-month course of biblical study, visiting many of the sites of the Old Testament as well as the holy places associated with the life of Jesus.

On May 24, 2001, Father David marked his 25th anniversary of priestly ordination. Because it had been his desire to lead an eremitical life when he transferred his stability to Subiaco Abbey, Abbot Jerome Kodell was able to grant this wish on November 7, 2001. Father David was assigned to live as a hermit with a ministry of prayer for the community of Subiaco, for the Church, and for the world.

Six months later Father David responded to the chaplaincy request of the Benedictine Sisters of St. Scholastica Monastery in Fort Smith, Arkansas. From June 2002 through June 2015, Father David served as Chaplain to the Sisters. From his simple, quiet monastic hermitage on their campus grounds, Father David scheduled his time for meeting the daily spiritual needs of the Sisters as well as allotting ample time for his private prayer and meditation.

Increasing immobility and physical decline led to Father David's requesting he be recalled to Subiaco in June 2015. Father David confided to a confrere this was a difficult decision for him to make. Both Father David and the Sisters were saddened to see him leave St. Scholastica's, yet each were grateful and blessed for their time together.

Upon his return to the Abbey, Father David remained active in community life until his health went into its final decline. He was regularly sought out by a number of his brother monks as both a confessor and spiritual director. Fr. David's experiences in his own monastic journey enabled him to bring understanding, compassion, and wise perspective when guiding others on their faith journey. Father David also acted as a consultant on matters involving the overall spiritual and temporal welfare of the Abbey.

Father David's countercultural lifestyle appealed to his heart and soul, and he was successful in integrating fourth century asceticism into a busy 21st century schedule. "It is my belief that the eremitical lifestyle and form of prayer cries out to be reborn in our culture," he stated time and again.

Two weeks prior to his death, Father David suffered a fall in his room in the monastery. He was taken to Mercy Hospital in Paris, Arkansas where his condition showed little improvement. He was then placed in hospice care upon his return to the Abbey five days before his death.

From the time of his fall until his death, Father David endured constant physical pain with heroic patience and the aid of pain medication.

At the time of his death, Father David was 91 years old. He had been a professed monk for 60 years and a priest for 44 years. He is buried in our cemetery.