

BRO. FRANCIS HEYER, S.M.
Celebrating 70 years of priesthood

Bro. Francis was born at home, the second of nine siblings, four of whom survived the first 24 hours of life. The other five died shortly before or after birth of a "blood disease," what was identified years later as an Rh-factor conflict.

At the age of two, Francis would become "blue in the face" and pass out on occasion as he romped around too actively. And yet, he inherited hypometabolism. In first grade, he would fall asleep at his desk. In second grade, he had difficulty learning his catechism. In the stress between expectations and metabolism, he had headaches from age six on.

In the fall of fourth grade, his appendix almost burst. The operation/recovery in 1930 cost him four weeks of school. Somehow, he passed at school year's end.

At the age of 11, he out-ran three or four others in a backyard marathon race on Dec. 27 or 28. He came home "blue, yellow and green in the face." A doctor visited his home the next day and found Francis's heart fibrillating. He missed eight weeks of school, and he spent six of those weeks in bed. As he had been attending novena devotions with everyone else in his parish in 1932, during the Great Depression, he attributed his survival to Our Lady of Perpetual Help. Again, he was passed in school.

Francis didn't do any running for three years; in baseball, some else even ran the bases for him. In 1935, he passed the physical for entrance into the Marianist Postulate. Even though, through time, there were other physical or psychological setbacks, Jesus and his wonderful mother were there to rescue him.

It should be obvious from the above that the greatest element of faith in Francis' life was belief in Divine Providence. A full account of his life, up to the present moment, would be an even stronger case for this.