

A SHORT ACCOUNT

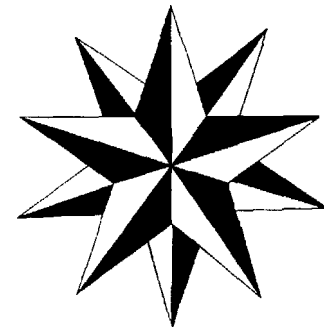
OF THE LIFE

OF

Brother Benildus Abel, F.S.C.

(Ricardo Alberto Barba)

1930 - 2001



SIGNUM FIDEI



TOUR OF DUTY

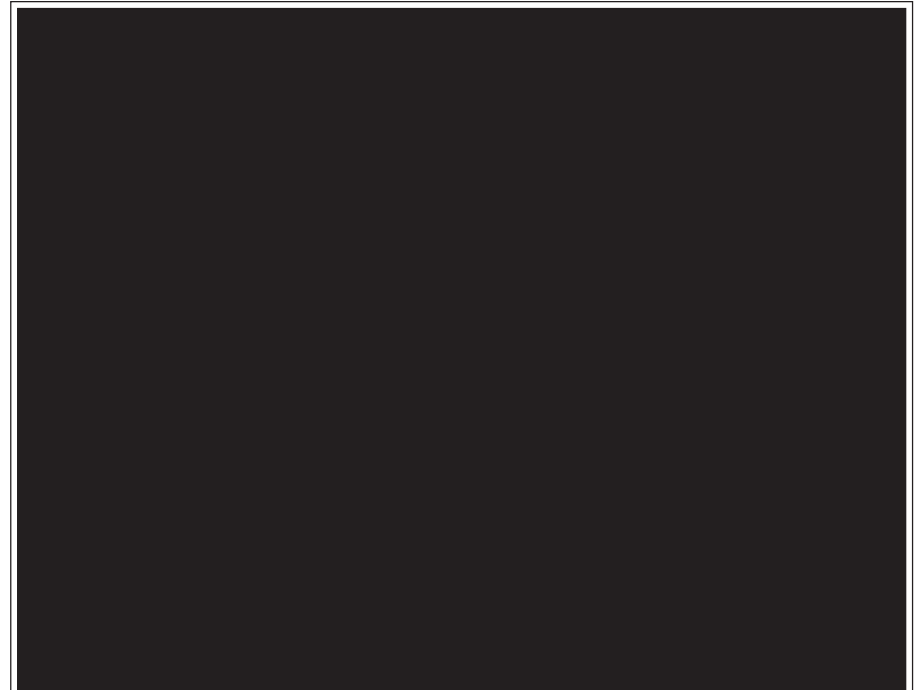
- 1952 - Scholasticate - February (Santa Fe, New Mexico)
- 1954 - College of Santa Fe (Santa Fe, New Mexico)
- 1955 - Holy Family Community - Magnolia (Lafayette, Louisiana)
- 1963 - St. Paul's School (Covington, Louisiana)
- 1966 - Scholasticate (Santa Fe, New Mexico)
- 1967 - St. Paul's School (Covington, Louisiana)
- 1981 - Studies - January (Florida)
- 1981 - Sangre de Cristo - September (Santa Fe, New Mexico)
- 1982 - Rummel High School (Metairie, Louisiana)
- 1984 - De La Salle High School (New Orleans, Louisiana)
- 1989 - Instituto La Salle (Managua, Nicaragua)
- 1996 - De La Salle High School (New Orleans, Louisiana)
- 2000 - Magnolia - December (Lafayette, Louisiana)
- 2001 - Died on Januray 14 (Lafayette, Louisiana)

Brother Abel Barba, FSC
1930-2001

The history of the people of **God** is rich in traditions and personalities which reveal a spirituality honoring physical work, often called “manual labor.” **Jesus**, of course, is the Christian’s first model of holiness, and, in the New Testament He is portrayed as a person intimately acquainted with His own spiritual heritage. He even speaks of a **God** who is continuing to work: “My Father is at work until now.” (Jn 5:17) **Jesus** believed that all work was meant to be an expression of a person’s love for **God** and union with one another in order to bring about **God**’s reign. He was identified by his own townspeople as a craftsman, a worker: “Is he not the carpenter, the son of **Mary**?” (Mk. 6:3)

The history of the De La Salle Christian Brothers of the New Orleans-Santa Fe Province is also filled with traditions and Brothers which reveal a spirituality honoring physical work. These Brothers were followers of **Jesus** the Craftsman and **St. John Baptist De La Salle**. These Brothers praised **God** by the work of their hands. One such Brother was **Brother Abel Barba**. Throughout the fifty years of his religious life, **Brother Abel** ministered in seven schools and the College of Santa Fe in Santa Fe, New Mexico.

Brother Abel passed away during the early morning hours on January 14, 2001, after a long battle with cancer. He is survived by his sisters: **Anita Gutierrez**, **Emma B. Moran**, **Alicia Acosta**, **Cecilia Barba**, all of El Paso, Texas, and **Carmen Ramirez** of Albuquerque, New Mexico. His surviving brothers are **Manuel Barba** of Reno, Nevada, and **Luis Barba, Sr.** of El Paso, Texas. In addition, **Brother Abel** is survived by twenty-seven (27) nieces and nephews, fifty-two (52) grand nieces and nephews, eleven (11) great-grand nieces and nephews, and his Brothers of the De La Salle Christian Brothers.



Brother Abel with his two brothers, Manny and Luis, El Paso, Texas, 1999.

Ricardo Alberto Barba, the son of **Ysidoro** and **Maria Barba**, was born in El Paso, Texas, on April 3, 1930. He was educated by the De La Salle Christian Brothers in El Paso, Texas, at Cathedral High School. Upon the completion of his secondary education, he entered the Novitiate of the Brothers in Lafayette, Louisiana. He received the religious habit on February 18, 1951, and was given the name **Brother Benildus Abel**. It was on July 2, 1957 that **Brother Abel** became a fully professed De La Salle Christian Brother.

Brother Luke Roney, **President Emeritus** of the College of Santa Fe, gives the following remembrance of **Brother Abel**:

“He was a very hard worker. He did all kinds of electrical and mechanical projects. He was a physically strong individual, capable of doing a lot of hard work.”

To those who knew him, it was obvious that **Brother Abel** loved his work. **Brother Donald Mouton**, a former Provincial of the De La Salle Christian Brothers and former President of the College of Santa Fe, remembers:

“He was someone who was always willing to address a problem involving electricity or air-conditioning. He was available any time, to take care of these types of crises.”

Brother Abel was in building maintenance at the College of Santa Fe in 1952 to 1954, in 1966, and again in 1981. He left his mark on quite a few schools in the New Orleans-Santa Fe Province. At De La Salle-Christian Brothers (Magnolia) in Lafayette, where he was assigned from 1955-1963, he was responsible for installing a large generator to power the water tower and the very large kitchen freezer. In those days, as at the present time, there were many power outages at Magnolia. At that time Novices, Junior Novices and Retired Brothers were all housed on the property, some 50 to 60 people. So as not to disrupt, in a drastic manner, the schedules of each residence, it was important that the water well and kitchen freezer be kept operative. **Brother Abel** was also involved in preparing the infrastructure for the retired Brothers residence and cafeteria building at Magnolia. In addition to the long hours he spent working each day, **Brother Abel** attended classes at the Vocational and Technical Trade School in New Iberia, Louisiana.

In 1963, **Brother Abel** was transferred to St. Paul’s School in Covington, Louisiana. He was of great assistance in the massive building projects that took place on that campus from 1963-1966, when **Brother Francis Beck** was principal of the school. **Brother Abel** supervised the crew of workers who traveled from Lacombe, Louisiana, to do building and remodeling at St. Paul’s.

Brother Jeffrey Calligan gives the following remembrance of **Brother Abel**:

“At table in the dining room, Brother Abel, loved to converse about athletes and their training. He was an avid sports fan. My years with him at St. Paul’s in Covington would be incomplete without the picture of Brother Abel sitting on the sideline with Gene Bennett’s basketball team, offering the players the special towels, monogrammed with their “Wolf” logo, which Brother Abel had purchased for them, and which, after each game, he dutifully washed and dried.”

In 1966, **Brother Abel**’s assistance was needed in Santa Fe, New Mexico, in order to put the finishing touches on the new home for the Student Brothers at Alexis Hall, called the Scholasticate. He saw to it that the residence was ready for occupancy, the grounds landscaped, and a water sprinkling system put in for the newly planted lawn on the side of Alexis Hall.

Brother Louis Welker gives the following remembrance:

“When I was a Senior in the Scholasticate, I saw Brother Abel and one of the Student Brothers (Scholastics), Brother Eugene Abeyta, spending many hours a day for many weeks planting the new lawn. Upon completion of that project, Brother Abel began the work of making the Scholasticate gymnasium functional. The tile on the floor had to be laid, the walls and beams painted, and a lighting system installed. All forty-six (46) Scholastics were put to work assisting Brother Abel with those

projects which took about a semester to complete.”

The following year saw **Brother Abel** back at St. Paul's in Covington. He remained there until the 1980-1981 school year when, during the first semester, he was allowed to make the Sangre Experience, a One Hundred Day Retreat, and, during the second semester, to become certified in air conditioning installation and maintenance. During the 1981 - 1982 school year, **Brother Abel** was assigned to Archbishop Rummel High School in Metairie, Louisiana, to maintain the air conditioning and heating system in that very large school. Shortly thereafter, he was assigned to De La Salle High School in New Orleans, Louisiana. After a very short stay at De La Salle, **Brother Abel** volunteered to become a missionary in Nicaragua.

Brother Donald Mouton gives the following account of **Brother Abel** and his work in Nicaragua:

“Brother Abel loved his work in Nicaragua and was highly regarded as a competent technician in one of the large schools, Instituto La Salle, in Managua. That school had huge swimming pools and gymnasiums which needed constant attention, so Brother Abel was always on call. When Brother Abel became ill with cancer, he had to return to the States. He was very courageous and never complained. The more debilitated he became physically, the more upbeat he became.”

In 1996, **Brother Abel** again took up residence in the De La Salle Community in New Orleans. He spent most of the day going around the residence doing repairs. When a Brother came from another community, **Brother Abel** was always

very welcoming and friendly.

Brother Nicholas Grahmann gives the following remembrance:

“Brother Abel impressed me by his smiling cheerfulness, his knowledge of his various specialties, and his readiness to offer help. He gave me an outstanding example of these qualities when I was Auxiliary Visitor and he was stationed at St. Paul's. Every time I drove up at St. Paul's he would ask for the keys to my car so that he could wash and service it.”

As **Brother Abel's** illness progressed, it became very difficult for him to climb the stairs to his room on the second floor of the Brothers residence. Yet, for four years he managed to do so. However, because such a task became increasingly more difficult, it was decided on December 10, 2000, that **Brother Abel** should be moved to De La Salle-Christian Brothers in Lafayette, Louisiana. When **Brother** arrived he was in excruciating pain. He was taken to Lourdes Hospital and, following many tests, the physicians diagnosed that the cancer had spread into **Brother's** bones and lungs. **Brother Abel** was disappointed with this news, but he took it very courageously.

When **Brother Abel** was released from the hospital, he was placed in Amelia Manor Nursing Center where he could be cared for by Hospice of Acadiana, specialists in pain management. **Brother Abel** adjusted wonderfully to his new home and soon won the affection of the administrative and nursing staff. On a daily basis, **Brother Leo Baltz** saw to it that **Brother Abel** received the Eucharist.

During his stay at Amelia Manor, **Brother Abel** was visited, on a regular basis, by **Brother Louis Welker**, Director of

Magnolia, **Brother Jerry Vincent**, Sub-Director of Magnolia, and by many members of the Magnolia Community. He was also visited by **Brother Clarence Fioke**, Visitor, and by **Brother Jeffrey Calligan**, from the Brothers Regional Office in Landover, Maryland.

Members of **Brother Abel's** family also were able to fly down to visit with **Brother Abel**: his brothers, **Manuel** and **Luis Barba**, and **Luis' wife, Ana**, as well as by his sisters, **Emma Moran** and **Alicia Acosta**. He was also visited by **Winnie Jordan**, a friend from Covington, Louisiana.

It is really one of life's mysteries, but two days before **Brother Abel** died, he displayed great energy, was very talkative, attended Mass, and had physical therapy. The day before he died, his energy level dropped dramatically and all he wanted to do was sleep. In the early morning hours of January 14, 2001, he passed away.

A Mass of Christian Burial was held at De La Salle-Christian Brothers at 11:30 a.m. in Lafayette, Louisiana. At the request of the **Barba** family, **Brother Abel's** remains were brought to Santa Fe, New Mexico for a wake service, Mass and Final Commendation. Burial took place in Rosario Cemetery in Santa Fe, New Mexico, on Thursday, January 18, 2001. Pall bearers were **Manuel Barba, Luis Barba, Mario Acosta, Cecilia Arreola, Luis Barba, Jr.** and **Rudy Barba**.

For those of us who survive **Brother Abel**, two things are certain: First, if the "Pearly Gates" ever get rusty hinges, **Brother Abel** will fix them; Second, if there are sports in heaven, **Brother Abel** is on the winning team.

May He Rest In Peace.

By: Brother Louis Welker, FSC
Director of De La Salle Christian Brothers
Lafayette, LA

Eulogy for Brother Benildus Abel Barba January 17, 2001

An article about Brother Abel Barba in yesterday's local paper quoted Brother Luke Roney, FSC, President Emeritus of the College of Santa Fe, and Brother Donald Mouton, former Provincial and also former President of the College of Santa Fe, as saying, among many other things, that Brother Abel was hard working. That's certainly something I remember about him as well.

I first met Brother Abel when I was in our Junior Novitiate and he was doing much of the maintenance of our property, which is called Magnolia, in Lafayette. There was a lot to do there with a number of buildings as well as a large piece of land, and Brother Abel put in a great deal of work to keep things running. I later knew Brother Abel when we were both at St. Paul's School, a boarding school the Brothers have in Covington, Louisiana. Being a boarding school, there is an especially large property to keep up. I particularly remember how much effort Brother Abel put into keeping up the gym and the football field. He took a great deal of pride in doing this.

But, I also remember that Brother Abel played hard. Not that he went out drinking and carousing, but that he was an athlete who played with energy. When I was in the Juniorate, the Brothers from the area would come and play us in football, basketball, baseball, etc. I remember one football game when I was probably a Sophomore. I was maybe 5'2" tall and weighed about 100 pounds. For some reason, I was lined up at halfback in a position where I had to block Brother Abel. Obviously that didn't work. He came through me so hard and fast that being knocked down didn't even hurt. He touched the quarterback down (we were only allowed to play touch football) but then came back and asked if

I was o.k. Which I was. At Covington we had a camp called "Three Rivers" where we Brothers went for recreation. Brother Abel, even with his busy schedule, went out boating there whenever he could. He loved to water ski and was always inviting us to go along. That's what I mean when I say he played hard.

Brother Abel took pride in what he did. He was always willing to help out with whatever repairs might need to be done. And he liked to take time to explain what he was doing so that others would understand.

He went to the missions of Nicaragua because he could be of help in keeping up the facilities down there. He could be of service in that way.

When illness struck, it was hard on him, as it would be on any of us, but he didn't let it get the best of him for as long as he could. The house we have at De La Salle in New Orleans is an old, three story house. No elevator, of course. But, Brother Abel continued to help out wherever he could and to pull himself up the stairs as long as he could.

He was dedicated.

We Brothers, and I know his family, will miss his dedication and we will miss him.

The Rosary was held at 7:00 p.m. on Wednesday, January 17, 2001, in the Chapel of the College of Santa Fe, Santa Fe, New Mexico.

By: Brother James Brown, Auxiliary Visitor



Saint Josepl