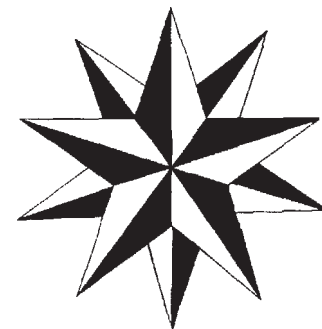


**A SHORT ACCOUNT  
OF THE LIFE  
OF**

**Brother Francis Beck, F.S.C.  
(Ernest Vincent)  
1916 - 1999**



**SIGNUM FIDEI**

## TOUR OF DUTY

- 1937 - Lake Charles, LA (Landry Memorial High School)
- 1940 - Lafayette, LA (De La Salle Juniorate) - Teacher
- 1944 - Lafayette, LA (De La Salle Juniorate) - Director
- 1946 - Rome, Italy (Second Novitiate studies)
- 1947 - Lafayette, LA (De La Salle Juniorate) - Director
- 1948 - Lafayette, LA (Vocation Director)
- 1952 - Santa Fe, NM (Director-Principal at St. Michael's High School)
- 1955 - New Orleans, LA (Director-Principal at De La Salle High School)
- 1961 - Covington, LA (Director-Principal at St. Paul's School)
- 1968 - Lafayette, LA (Auxiliary Visitor)
- 1969 - Metairie, LA (Visitor) - N. Arnoult St. Residence
- 1975 - Metairie, LA (Finance Director) - N. Arnoult St. Residence, Auxiliary Visitor
- 1976 - Rome, Italy (Appointed Institute Treasurer)  
Returned in December because of illness
- 1976 - Metairie, LA (Finance Director) - N. Arnoult St. Residence, Auxiliary Visitor
- 1978 - Metairie, LA (Rummel Community) Finance Director, Auxiliary Visitor
- 1990 - Metairie, LA (Rummel Community) - Semi-retired
- 1993 - Lafayette, LA (De La Salle Christian Brothers)
- 1995 - New Orleans, LA (Nursing Home Patient)
- 1999 - Died in New Orleans, donated his body to science

## **Brother Francis Beck, FSC 1916 - 1999**

The pages of history are filled with the lives of great leaders. There are leaders like Mahatma Gandhi, Abraham Lincoln, Martin Luther King, Mother Teresa of Calcutta, etc. All of these great leaders were propelled by a vision to make the world a better place. All of them endured criticism and some form of persecution, but ultimately his or her vision took root in the hearts of others. A person of vision has the gift of foresight; seeing the achievement of the ideal in the mind's eye. Often, their ideas or plans are seen as impractical, too idealistic, or fantastic! It doesn't help much to have a vision if you can't communicate it to others. All the great visionaries were able to communicate their vision to others by word and example. On July 18, 1999, Brother Francis Beck entered into his eternal reward. As a man of vision, he used his gifts to make life better for numerous young people, relatives, and especially his religious family. He was 83 years of age and had been a Christian Brother for 66 years.

Born March 31, 1916, in Denver, CO., Ernest V. Beck, Jr. was the son of Ernest V. Beck, Sr., and the former Velma Mannix, both deceased.

Brother Francis was preceded in death by his sister Virginia Beck Smith, and his brother Jack Francis Beck. Survivors include five nieces: Marianne Beck, Virginia Smith Domboski, Seton Jenkins, Suzanne Mojen and Maryvelma Smith O'Neil. Also, three nephews: John Beck, Christopher Beck Smith and Vincent de Paul Smith. Brother Francis is also survived by 14 great nieces and nephews.

After graduating, in 1933, from Regis High School in Denver, CO., Ernest entered the Christian Brothers Novitiate in Lafayette, LA. Upon completion of the Postulancy, he received the religious habit of the Brothers on August 14, 1933. He was given the name Brother Abel Francis. On August 15, 1934, he pronounced first vows.

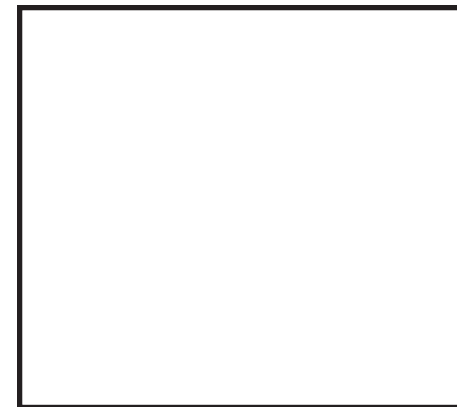
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Having completed the Novitiate, Brother Francis began his teacher training at Sacred Heart College in Las Vegas, NM. He earned a BA in English and an MA in Education. It was in 1937, that he had his first teaching experience at Landry Memorial High School in Lake Charles, LA.

**"His enthusiastic optimism as a beginning teacher at Landry Memorial High School in Lake Charles, LA. drew the attention of his superiors who brought him into the work of training young men studying for the Brotherhood in Lafayette, LA."** (Christian Brothers Connection, 1995).

In 1940, Brother Francis was assigned as a teacher at De La Salle Juniorate in Lafayette, LA. Later, in 1944, he was named Director/Principal of the Juniorate. During the 1946-47 school year, he made the Second Novitiate in Rome, Italy. Upon his return to the United States, he was again appointed Director/Principal of the Juniorate. From 1948 - 52 Brother Francis served as Vocation Director for the New Orleans - Santa Fe Province.

As was mentioned, Brother Francis was a man of vision. He had the wonderful gift of being able to take an imaginative leap into the future. It was in 1952, when he was appointed Director/Principal of St. Michael's High School in Santa Fe, NM, that this gift blossomed.



*Director/Principal, St. Michael's High School,  
Santa Fe, NM, 1953*

(2)

From 1952 until his retirement in 1990, each new assignment saw a new vision. On occasion, the articulation of his vision left his Brothers amused, but his presentations were always zestful and inspiring.

The 1995 Spring issue of the Christian Brothers Connection gives the following overview of Brother Francis' years as an Administrator and Provincial:

**"For some twenty years Brother Francis served as chief administrator at St. Michael's High School, in Santa Fe, De La Salle High School in New Orleans, and St. Paul's School in Covington. While in Santa Fe, Brother Francis initiated the excavation and restoration of the San Miguel Mission, which served as a chapel for the school.**

**At De La Salle Brother envisioned a healthy expansion and during his administration both a freshman wing and a gymnasium were added to the campus. At St. Paul's School he undertook a complete beautification of the campus, the building of two residence halls, a student center, swimming pool, and home for the Brothers. The crown jewel of these improvements is the beautiful chapel donated in memory of his parents, Mr. and Mrs. Ernest V. Beck, Sr.**

**Called to serve two terms as Provincial (1969-1975), Brother Francis led the New Orleans - Santa Fe Province through six difficult and challenging years following Vatican II. In that post he analyzed the financial implications of providing for the elderly and infirm Brothers who, until then, had relied entirely on the shared income of active confreres. He made provision to buy into**

**a minimal program with Social Security, and set about building up a trust fund to partially supplement the foreseen deficit.**

**Following his second term as Provincial, Brother served as assistant to Brother Paul Walsh and continued as financial director of the province. As always, in the forefront of activity, Brother arranged for all the institutions and communities to adopt a centralized computer accounting system."**

In August of 1976, Brother Francis was appointed Institute Treasurer and moved to the Brothers' motherhouse in Rome, Italy. Due to poor health, it was necessary for Brother Francis to return to the United States in December of the same year. Once again he became Finance Director for the New Orleans - Santa Fe Province; a position which he held until 1990.

When Brother Francis was in his late seventies, he was afflicted with multiple sclerosis and Parkinson's Disease. Over the next fifteen years he endured his trials with much courage. In 1993, he was transferred to De La Salle - Christian Brothers in Lafayette, LA. Wanting to be close to his family, he asked for permission to reside in a nursing home in the New Orleans area. In 1995, he became a resident of Colonial Oaks Nursing Home in Metairie, LA. Desiring to be in a place where Mass was available, he was moved to Malta Park Nursing Home in New Orleans. His physical condition continued to deteriorate, but he always kept his mind occupied.

In a letter dictated to his niece, Seton Jenkins, Brother Francis reflected on his life as an invalid:

**"When I was diagnosed with a deteriorating disease, my brothers, nieces and nephews, and extended families had the opportunity to care for**

me. Gradually, I could no longer drive a car, speak over a whisper, walk, compute figures, or perform the work that I deemed helpful for my Brothers. My mind was active and alert, but one by one, the gifts that propelled me gradually diminished. My niece continued to tell me that these years were the most productive in my life. Indeed, I learned in those years, as my body twisted and contorted and the muscle mass that once climbed fences could no longer pick up a pen, that life does not consist in *doing*, but in *being*. I acquired the art of reflection and contemplation. I learned that no matter how physically constraining life may seem, there is a liberating 'Spirit' that beckons humanity on to higher things. In my bedside, corralled by iron bars, besieged by cavernous bedsores, bound in a body that diminished to skin and bone, I inwardly connected to the mountaintop and felt the heights and depths of their grandeur. In the warm caresses of my Caretaker, Stella, I felt the tufted mountain peaks and the presence of all those families that loved and nurtured me. In the eyes of my Brothers who visited me, I saw the sign of faith and felt the rugged formation of the mountain floor. My body edifice, shriveled to nothing, allowed me to live faith and feel the presence of the God who gives meaning to all living things through the gift of Eucharist."

On July 16, 1999, Brother Francis' condition deteriorated. Brothers, loved ones and friends knew that the end was near. At 7:05 p.m. on July 18, 1999, Brother Francis entered into the vision of the Eternal One. In the same letter, dictated to his niece he said:

"There were no dreams that I felt could not be accomplished."

Brother Francis, your Religious Brothers, relatives, friends and the many young people who benefited from your vision, say:

## MAN OF "VISION"

May the Lord reward you Brother Francis! For:

- *Saying "yes" to your calling as a Brother of the Christian Schools.*
- *Your enthusiastic optimism as a classroom teacher.*
- *Your zestful approach to living life.*
- *Being a pioneer, ground breaker, builder and administrator.*
- *The faith, patience and cheerfulness you showed us in the face of illness.*
- *The gift of vision which you used to build additions to schools, modernize educational programs (TV teaching) and foresee the retirement needs of Brothers and Lasallian colleagues.*
- *Knowing how to live well; filling each day with enriching experiences that gave meaning to life.*

## **Eulogy for Brother Francis Beck May 20, 1999**

I am happy to be here with you this morning to share a few thoughts about the life of Brother Francis Beck. First, let us rejoice that he is now in the bosom of the Eternal Father, who called him in a special way to witness to the Lasallian charism of Christian education.

I would like to focus on the trait that I consider to be his outstanding talent. He was above all a man of **VISION**. He was called on early in his career to provide leadership among the Brothers. He had the ability to **SEE** what needed to be done in the community or school. He served many years as Vocation Director, Formation Director, Community Director, Principal, and finally Provincial. In every case he asked himself how he could build his community or school into a better place. Pinky, as we affectionately called him, had the **INSIGHT** to see what was needed and to gather those around him who could accomplish the needed tasks.

In a special way, he touched the future of three schools in the District: St. Michael's High, De La Salle High, and St. Paul's School. In each case he left behind him a better facility, a more financially viable school, and most of all an institution that provided the best Christian education possible. He believed in technology and the latest teaching methods. He raised funds to secure the best teaching aids and teachers he could recruit. He had the **FORESIGHT** to realize where education was headed and how necessary it was to be on the cutting edge. He was willing to take risks to make Lasallian education the best that it could be.

When he became Visitor he applied the same techniques to running the District. Realizing the upcoming needs of the Brothers who were aged and infirm, he set out to provide a source of funding to help care for them in their golden years. He, along with Brother Joel Damian, of the then Chicago District, were well ahead of their time in founding a Religious Retirement Trust. Pinky had the **VISION** to make sure the Brothers joined the Social Secu-



*De La Salle High School, New Orleans, LA  
ground breaking for new gym, 1961*



*Director/Principal, St. Paul's School,  
Covington, 1962*

A memorial Mass was held on Tuesday, May 20 at 10:00 a.m. at Our Lady of the Holy Rosary, in New Orleans, LA. Brother Francis donated his body to science. At some time in the future, his remains will be buried at Christian Brothers Cemetery in Lafayette, LA.

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

rity plan once the government approved of allowing religious into the program. He was always **ASSESSING** how he could provide adequately for the District. While finances were his forte, he never lost sight of the fact that each Brother in the community and each student in the school were the real reasons for his efforts.

It is a beautiful thought to be able to say that Brother Francis always left an assignment in a better condition than when he began it. The present students at St. Michael's, De La Salle, and St. Paul's don't even know that they owe him a great debt of gratitude. He made it possible for these institutions to continue to the present day by his careful **PLANNING**. God knows he has left this District much better off because of his years at its helm. And this does not only apply to financial planning. He made sure each Brother was adequately prepared to be a real apostle in the classroom. He insisted on Brothers earning graduate degrees and engaging in continuing education to continually improve themselves and serve their students better.

How many of us in this Church today can say we left our schools, we left our jobs, we left our friends and co-workers in **BETTER SHAPE** at the end of an assignment than when we found them? I believe this was a burning desire that Pinky had -- to make sure things would be better off when he left than when he arrived.

All of us Brothers in the District owe a great deal to this man who was not afraid to lead. We are indeed much better off because of his years of taking risks to assure our future. Only God knows how we could have survived without his leadership which **ENVISIONED** the next millenium.

If I can be bold enough to create a scenario about Brother Francis, it would be this. I can just picture him in heaven saying to Brother Joel Damian, "Have you been following how well the stock market is doing these days? Which stocks do you like?"

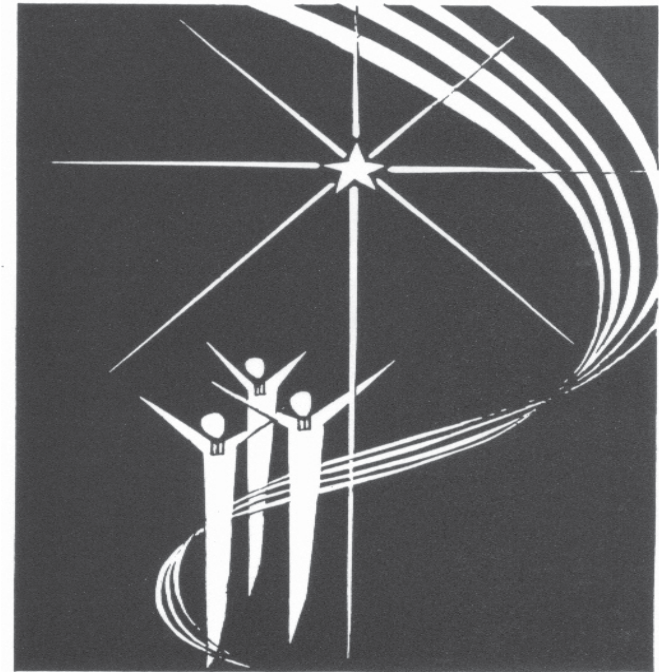
Brother Francis left his body to science. His body is not present

in the church today. It's the same **INSIGHT** he leaves us in death as he did in life. As you know, he suffered at the end of his life with several debilitating diseases. To his way of thinking, if the doctors and scientists are able to help someone with similar diseases to live a better life, his sacrifice would be well worth it. In other words, make the world a better place than the way you found it. In Lasallian terms, this is seeing things with the **EYES OF FAITH**.

Let us all remember our Brother Francis to God as he begins his new life in eternity.

Brother Clarence Fioke, FSC  
Provincial

## "Reach for the Stars"



## "DARE THE DREAM"