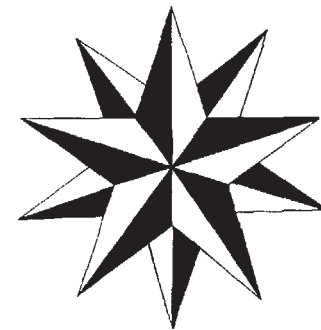


**A SHORT ACCOUNT**

**OF THE LIFE**

**OF**

**Brother Gabriel Daigle, F.S.C.  
(Armand Daigle)  
1906 - 1999**



**SIGNUM FIDEI**

# Tour Of Duty

1925 - Franklin, Louisiana (Hanson Memorial High School)

1931 - Lembecq lez Hal (Belgium) - Second Novitiate

1932 - Lembecq les Hal (Belgium) - Teacher in the Juniorate

1933 - Lille, France (University of Lille -- student)

1935 - Las Vegas, New Mexico (Scholasticate teacher)

1936 - Bernalillo, New Mexico (St. Nicholas School) - Director/Principal

1937 - Lake Charles, Louisiana (Landry High School ) - Director/Principal

1941 - Lafayette, Louisiana (Juniorate Director)

1944 - Santa Fe, New Mexico (St. Michael's High School) - Director/  
Principal

1946 - El Paso, Texas (teacher)

1947 - Galveston, Texas (teacher and Sub-Director) - Kirwin High School

1948 - Galveston, Texas (Kirwin High School) - Director/Principal

1952 - Lafayette, Louisiana (De La Salle Novitiate) - Director

1966 - New Iberia, Louisiana (Catholic High School - Teacher

1966 - (Oct) Metairie, Louisiana (Rummel) - Counselor

1993 - Lafayette, Louisiana (De La Salle Christian Bros.) - retired

1999 - Lafayette, Louisiana (Died at 3:00 p.m.) on January 2

In the book *Gesondheit*, Patch Adams, the main character makes the statement: "All of life is a journey home; back to one's beginning and forward to one's end." On this earth we are homeward bound pilgrims who cannot rest until we rest in God, our final destination. On January 2, 1999, Brother Gabriel Daigle reached his final destination. In his long homeward journey to God, he met head-on the challenges of life; no shortcuts, or easy ways out. He was 92 years old when he died.

Armand Daigle was born on March 12, 1906, in Lafayette, LA, the son of Oscar Daigle and the former Elizabeth Landry. He is survived by four sisters, Mrs. Florence Boudreaux, Mrs. Lydia Schoeffler, Mrs. Martin Monies, and Mrs. Ann Sowar. He was preceded in death by five brothers and seven sisters. From Brother Gabriel's large family came a vocation to the priesthood, Monsignor Jules Daigle. In addition, three of his sisters, Sister Teresita Daigle, Sister Veronica Daigle and Sister Berchmans Daigle, were members of the Sisters of Mount Carmel.

Armand Daigle entered the Juniorate in Las Vegas in 1921, received the habit of the Christian Brothers in 1922, and began his year as a novice Brother. Brother Clarence Fioke, Visitor, made the following comments in his Eulogy for Brother Gabriel:

**"This was an initiation period to the life of the Brothers but also an initiation in a life of hardship and severity. Conditions in those days were sparse as the Brothers were just beginning a new province and did not have much by way of financial stability. Often, what we would consider the basic necessities of life were lacking - like sufficient food or ample clothing. But Brother Gabriel persevered despite the hardship of those early days."**

On August 15, 1923, Brother Gabriel made his first profession of vows. He began his college education and earned a B.A. in English from Manhattan College. His first teaching assignment was in Franklin, LA at Hanson Memorial High School. On July 21, 1931, he made final profession of vows and was assigned to make the Second

(1)

Novitiate at the Brothers Generalate in Lemberg Lez Hal, Belgium. Upon completion of the Second Novitiate he became a teacher in the Brothers Juniorate in Belgium. From 1933 - 1935 he studied French and Psychology at the University of Lille, France, where he earned an M.A. August of 1935 saw him back in Las Vegas, NM, as a teacher in the Brothers Scholasticate. During his educational career, Brother Gabriel was Director/Principal of several Christian Brothers schools in the New Orleans - Santa Fe Province.



*Brother Gabriel, Age 25,  
Second Novitiate in Lembecz  
lez Hal, Belgium, 1931*

The French Brothers were the Founders of the New Orleans - Santa Fe Province. As such, all the positions of authority were held by these French Brothers. Brother Gabriel was recognized as a leader and was prepared to minister in that capacity in the Province. His first position as Director/Principal was at St. Nicholas School in Bernalillo, NM, in 1936 at the age of thirty. Brother Gabriel made the following comment concerning the early days as teacher and administrator in the *Raider Digest*, 1985, Spring Issue:

**"The students were less exposed to the media and were less knowledgeable. They were also easier to discipline and the teachers were much stricter than they are today."**

"Discipline" and "strictness" are two words that describe Brother

(2)

played throughout his long career. If you needed correction, you got it! If you felt he was harboring ill feelings because of something you did wrong, you were wrong! When correcting, he often used the expression: "What you did was not good." It was as if he were encouraging you to do good.

In 1941, he became Director of the Juniorate in Lafayette, LA. He remained in this position for three years. He then returned to the familiar territory of Director/Principal for the next nine years in Christian Brother schools in New Mexico and Texas.

When someone is considering joining a religious community, there begins the long "circling - around - each other" process between a candidate and the community before formal acceptance. In 1952, Brother Gabriel was appointed Director of Novices for the Province in Lafayette, LA. For the next 14 years he would be heavily involved in the long "circling - around - each other" process. Archival records show that 171 novices went through training with him as their Director.

As Director of novices, Brother Gabriel had to give a spiritual conference every day. More than once he was heard to say:

**"I hate giving conferences and God has placed me in a position where I have to give one every day. "**

His conferences placed emphasis on Thomistic spiritual and moral theology. The themes that carried through the year were:

**"Get to know God, the most knowable reality."**

and,

**"A life with God demands certain things."**

Such discipline would enable the young Brother to become a better follower of Christ.

He wanted his Novices to know themselves, to be able to set a plan for improvement and growth. He valued common sense and those who seemed to lack it did not last long in the "circling -

One of Brother Gabriel's hobbies was gardening; he loved flowers. When he was Director of Novices, there were numerous flower beds on the Magnolia property. Brother Rene Clerc gives the following remembrance:

**"The garden which he tended during manual labor was his pride and joy. He suffered through our inexperience in not distinguishing between weeds and plants when we hoed. He smiled when we played 'Holland': block the last row on each end of the garden, turn on the water, and flood the rows."**

In 1966, Brother Gabriel's time as Novice Master came to an end. He was sixty years of age and had been out of school ministry for fourteen years. He returned to school work. First, a short stay at Catholic High in New Iberia, LA, and then on to Archbishop Rummel High School in Metairie, LA, where he remained for twenty-seven years.

Teenagers often express themselves in insightful cliches. One often used exhortation is, "Get a life." Throughout his years at Archbishop Rummel, Brother Gabriel worked to help the young men that he served as Guidance Counselor to "Get a life." Brother Gabriel, never one to choose the easy way out, was hip-deep in reality, with his sleeves rolled up. He faced the reality that many of the young men entrusted to his care were in some way wounded.

One of his ideas that was quickly implemented by the school's Guidance Department was the idea that the guidance counselors stay with their level students for the full four years of their schooling.

**"By the time they are seniors, the counselors really know their students."**

Mark Firmin, a graduate and now a teacher at Archbishop Rummel High School, makes the following comments:

**"The best thing that I can remember from Brother Gabriel was that he believed in me. And I knew**

that, which was a driving force in many of my achievements at Rummel High School. He could easily pinpoint my strengths, work with my weaknesses, and treat me with the greatest dignity as he did all of his students.

I returned to Archbishop Rummel High School in 1993 as a teacher in mathematics. Brother Gabriel always knew my strength in math as a student because he always relied on me to tutor students in this subject. Upon my return as a teacher to Rummel, I had no prior experience as a high school teacher. All I had to draw from was my years at Rummel as a student myself. So as I remembered how Brother Gabriel dealt with his students, I treat my students with dignity, try to be very understanding, and also be a good listener. But my number one priority in working with my students in my six years at Archbishop Rummel High School is to *believe in them* and their abilities.

I am comforted to know that Brother Gabriel lived life to its fullest and his spirit lives on in the beautiful courtyard gardens that he tended to for many years."

Brother Brendan Hayden, who was Assistant Principal and Principal of Archbishop Rummel High School (1971 - 1975 and 1979-1984), recalls:

"I have fond memories of Brother Gabriel Daigle from the time when he served as Counselor at Archbishop Rummel High School. At one point, a course in film making was included in the curriculum. Those who watched T.V. during the 80's might recall a commercial in which people spoke of their broker. When one of the

(5)

characters said, 'My broker is .....,' the other characters became silent and turned to hear the name of the broker. The film class took this concept but spoke in terms of counselors. When one of the students in the film class said, 'My counselor is Brother Gabriel,' all heads turned. I thought this to be a tremendous compliment to Brother Gabriel.

Brother Gabriel also taught me a lesson in compassion. At Rummel, at that time, the rule for seniors was that if you failed a subject and thus did not have the credits to graduate, you did not appear on the stage at graduation, but received your diploma in private, only after completing summer school. When I informed the parents of one of our seniors that this was the case for their son, the parents came to Rummel to speak to Brother Gabriel, Senior Counselor. Brother Gabriel then came to me and said, 'Mercy is needed here. These parents are distraught!' There and then, I changed the rule concerning graduation and allowed students who had failed a course to graduate from the stage. Graduation was as much for the parents as it was for the students. I held to this in a future principalship."

One more memory of Brother Gabriel's days at Rummel:

"The then Chair of the Guidance Department re-signed. Brother Gabriel had seniority. I, therefore, went to him and offered him the Chair of the Guidance Department. Brother Gabriel declined, but told me that I could make no better choice than to name as Chair the only woman then in the Guidance Department. I was impressed that Brother Gabriel, knowing all the

(6)

**male-oriented traditions of the Christian Brothers, could recognize the talents of this woman and recommend that she become the Chair of the Guidance Department of an all-male school."**

The year 1993 saw a major change in the Administration at Archbishop Rummel High School: the first lay principal. The number of Brothers involved in the school was reduced from nine to only two. The decision was made by Brother Gabriel, in consultation with the Provincial, to live his retirement years at De La Salle - Christian Brothers in Lafayette, LA. This he did beginning on August 1, 1993. Immediately, De La Salle became his home again. Quickly, the patio filled with beautiful flower beds. At his request, from an old slab near the pasture rose a greenhouse. He took his place among the Brothers of the community, worked in the patio garden, tended plants in the greenhouse, spent a great deal of time reading and praying.

For years Brother Gabriel suffered from painful arthritis and advanced arteriosclerosis. In August of 1998, his health began to decline rapidly. He was very afraid of becoming a burden to the community. After a long stay in the hospital, he was able to return home. With the assistance of Brother Jerry Vincent and our nursing staff, he was present with the community for prayer, meals and other activities. In early December he was no longer able to get out of bed. After consultation with his doctors, it was decided to bring in Hospice of Acadiana to assist with pain management. His condition steadily declined. On the morning of December 30, he rallied, wanted to eat and was talkative. Brother Louis Welker, Director commented:

**"I think this is the candle burning bright before it goes out."**

The next morning, on December 31, he was still very lively and alert. He asked to look out onto the garden; this he enjoyed for about an hour. Then he requested lunch, took a nap and began slipping away. This condition continued until 3:05 p.m. on January 2, 1999, when he peacefully passed away.

Brother Louis Welker, Director of De La Salle in Lafayette, LA, gives the following remembrance of Brother Gabriel:

**"I lived with Brother Gabriel for twenty years. He rarely spoke about the past. It was only when you asked him a specific question about the past that he gave an answer. I'm convinced that he lived totally in the present; he didn't see the past as a destination. When I was a Novice (age 18), I asked Brother Gabriel (age 56) how it felt to be so old. He was more than gracious with his reply! Now that I'm approaching 56, I realize how stupid the question was. On another occasion I asked him about an incident that had taken place in the Novitiate. He replied: 'I'm trying to forget, but you won't let me!'"**

**After leaving the Novitiate, Brother Gabriel had a long successful ministry at Archbishop Rummel High School; twenty-seven years. In my youthful naivete, I had declared him old, but he glowed with future. With the changes brought on by the Second Vatican Council, so many Catholics went off to the past. Not so Brother Gabriel, he was off to the future. As death approached Brother Gabriel was fully aware of what was happening. Once again, he was off to the future; hip deep in reality with his sleeves rolled up.**

**The first story in the Bible is about a garden. Christ's Resurrection is celebrated in a garden, and, in one account, He is disguised as a gardener. Gardens are a rich metaphor for life, renewal and hope. Brother Gabriel we're going to miss seeing you in the garden; especially in the Spring."**

A Mass of Christian Burial was held on January 5, 1999, at 11:00 a.m. Interment took place in Christian Brothers cemetery in Lafayette, LA.

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

**Brother Gabriel Daigle, FSC**  
**(Armand Daigle)**  
**March 12, 1906 - January 2, 1999**

Eulogy given by Brother Clarence Fioke, FSC, at the Mass of Christian Burial.

Even though we commemorate a death this morning, it is really a day of great joy. Our brother, Gabriel Daigle, 92 years of age, has gone to the reward which he spent so many years preparing for.

Armand Daigle entered the Juniorate in Las Vegas in 1921 and received the habit of the Brothers in 1922. This was an initiation period to the life of the Brothers but also an initiation in a life of hardship and severity. Conditions in those days were sparse as the Brothers were just beginning a new Province and did not have much by way of financial stability. Often, what we would consider the basic necessities of life were lacking -- like sufficient food or ample clothing. But Brother Gabriel persevered despite the hardships of those early days. After teaching for six years in Franklin, he was recognized as having special talents and abilities. He was sent to Lembeq lez Hal in Belgium to make his second novitiate. At this early time in the young Province all the positions of authority were held by the French Brothers who were the Founders of the District. Armand was sent to the second novitiate to prepare for leadership in the District. He was one of the first American-born young men destined to serve as Principal and Director. He took sick, however, in Belgium, and needed time to recuperate so he spent some time as a student in France at the University of Lille. When he returned to the States, he spent one year as a teacher in the Scholasticate at Las Vegas, NM, and then his time for leadership arrived. At 30 years of age he became Director and Principal of St. Nicholas School in Bernalillo, and then he went to Lake Charles to do the same at Landry Memorial High School.

He then was appointed Director of the Juniorate in Lafayette. These three years introduced him to the formation process of training young men who were studying to be Brothers. After some years in Santa Fe,

Galveston, and El Paso, he was given the task of becoming Novice Master, a position he held for fourteen years. During this time he worked closely with young men of college age to introduce them to the basics of religious life. Some 171 Novices went through training with him as their Director. Twenty four (24) of these still remain in the Order today as Brothers. Three (3) others died in the Order.

He was a stern but fair formator. He accepted each young man as an individual and did his best to guide him to become a good Brother.

After finishing his 14-year assignment as Director of Novices, he spent the next 27 years at Rummel High School in Metairie. As Counselor there he was well accepted and respected by the young men who sought him out for direction. Who knows how many hundreds of young people he influenced during those years?

After coming here to Magnolia to retire, he grew old gracefully and with much peace. He had a great love for flowers and plants and until the very last few months continued to work in the patio, the garden, and the greenhouse.

He was more than ready to meet Jesus whom he spent his whole life following. I cannot help but believe that St. La Salle was present to introduce this faithful disciple of his to the Lord. Brother Gabriel now needs to continue to look after this Institute from his new vantage point in heaven.

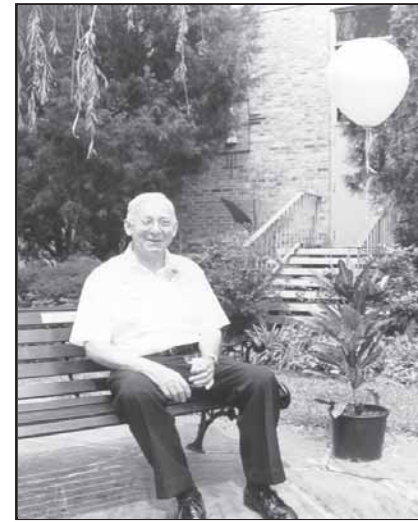


*Brother Gabriel with his football team at  
Hanson High School, Franklin, LA, 1925*

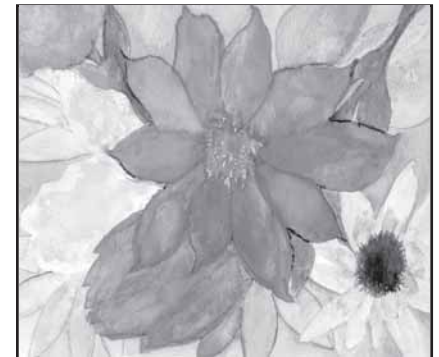
***Bloom Where You Are Planted***

Though the ground you've been given is rocky,  
a less than ideal plot,  
No good will come from complaining,  
o'er your less than ideal lot  
Roll up your sleeves and dig in,  
make the best of what you've been given,  
Turn your deserts into gardens verdant,  
it's the way of successful livin'.  
Few joys will give you more pleasure,  
few rewards rival or match,  
The thrill that comes from creating  
something glorious from scratch,  
Now the Lord may someday present you  
with a place far greater than now,  
Green pastures that stretch on forever,  
fields that have not seen a plow,  
But don't wait for a dreamland harvest,  
don't pass up the crop at hand,  
Opportunity's a fickle dayflower,  
make the most of your God-given land,  
Bloom where you are planted,  
work today as if it's your last,  
The Lord will richly bless you  
and you'll never regret the past.

*Fred Bauer*



*In his garden at  
Archbishop  
Rummel High School,  
Metairie, LA, 1985*



*Flowers drawn by one of  
Brother Gabriel's students  
on the occasion of his  
retirement in 1985.  
Archbishop Rummel  
High School,  
Metairie, LA.*



*One of Brother  
Gabriel's flower  
beds at  
De La Salle  
(Magnolia) 1998*