

A SHORT ACCOUNT

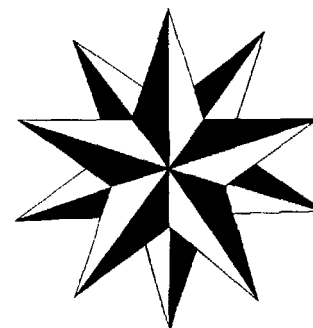
OF THE LIFE

OF

Brother Leo Paul Gilsdorf, F.S.C.

(Anthony Leo)

1926 - 2000



SIGNUM FIDEI



TOUR OF DUTY

- 1945 - Scholasticate (Las Vegas, New Mexico)
- 1947 - Scholasticate (Santa Fe, New Mexico)
- 1948 - Hanson Memorial High School (Franklin, Louisiana)
- 1949 - St. Nicholas School (Bernalillo, New Mexico)
- 1950 - Landry Memorial High School (Lake Charles, Louisiana)
- 1953 - Landry Memorial High School (Lake Charles, Louisiana)
- 1955 - Mullen High School (Denver, Colorado)
- 1957 - Landry Memorial High School (Lake Charles, Louisiana)
- 1963 - Landry Memorial High School (Lake Charles, Louisiana)
- 1965 - Hanson Memorial High School (Franklin, Louisiana)
- 1966 - De La Salle High School (New Orleans, Louisiana)
- 1968 - Cathedral High School (El Paso, Texas)
- 1970 - St. Michael's High School (Santa Fe, New Mexico)
- 1976 - Mullen High School (Denver, Colorado)
- 1978 - College of Santa Fe (Santa Fe, New Mexico)
- 1984 - Mullen High School (Denver, Colorado)
- 2000 - Cathedral High School (El Paso, Texas)
 - St. Michael's Community (Santa Fe, New Mexico)
 - Died in Santa Fe on October 5, 2000.

Brother Leo Paul Gilsdorf, FSC
1926 - 2000

The famous Trappist monk, **Thomas Merton**, wrote in a beautiful prayer: "My Lord God, I have no idea where I am going. I do not see the road ahead of me." It could be said that anyone who begins a sacred journey will experience the same feelings. Where will the road take me along the journey? Where will it end? Like the Magi who followed a star on their sacred journey to Bethlehem, so **Brother Leo Paul** set out on his sacred journey into religious life with the faith that God would lead him along the right path. Our Catholic faith teaches us that all of life is a journey that will eventually take us home to our heavenly reward. Death is a journey to new life. Death is returning home. In the early evening of October 5, 2000, **Brother Leo Paul** made his journey home. He was seventy-four years of age and had been a De La Salle-Christian Brother for fifty-six years. Born at Fort Collins, Colorado, on July 8, 1926, **Paul Gilsdorf** was the son of **Bernard Gilsdorf** and the former **Valeria Schmidt**, both deceased. He is survived by his brothers: **Brother Felix Gilsdorf, FSC**, **Edwin Gilsdorf** and his wife, **Mary**; sisters: **Bernadette Graas** and her husband, **Charles**; **Mary Rose Bousseilaire**, **Carmela Sunney Devers** and husband, **Sam**; **Therese Michaud** and husband, **Eugene**; **Virginia Mahoney** and **Leona Goheen**; numerous nieces and nephews; and the Christian Brothers of the New Orleans-Santa Fe Province.

At the age of fifteen, **Paul** entered the Junior Novitiate of the Christian Brothers in Las Vegas, New Mexico. He received the religious habit on August 14, 1944, and was given the name **Brother Anthony Leo**. However, when the Brothers were permitted to resume their family names, **Paul** chose to be known as **Brother Leo Paul**. **Brother Leo Paul** professed first vows on August 15, 1945 and final vows in 1951. **Brother Leo Paul** held a BA in General Science from Notre Dame University, a BA in History from the College of Santa



Brother Leo Paul, Novitiate photo, 1944.

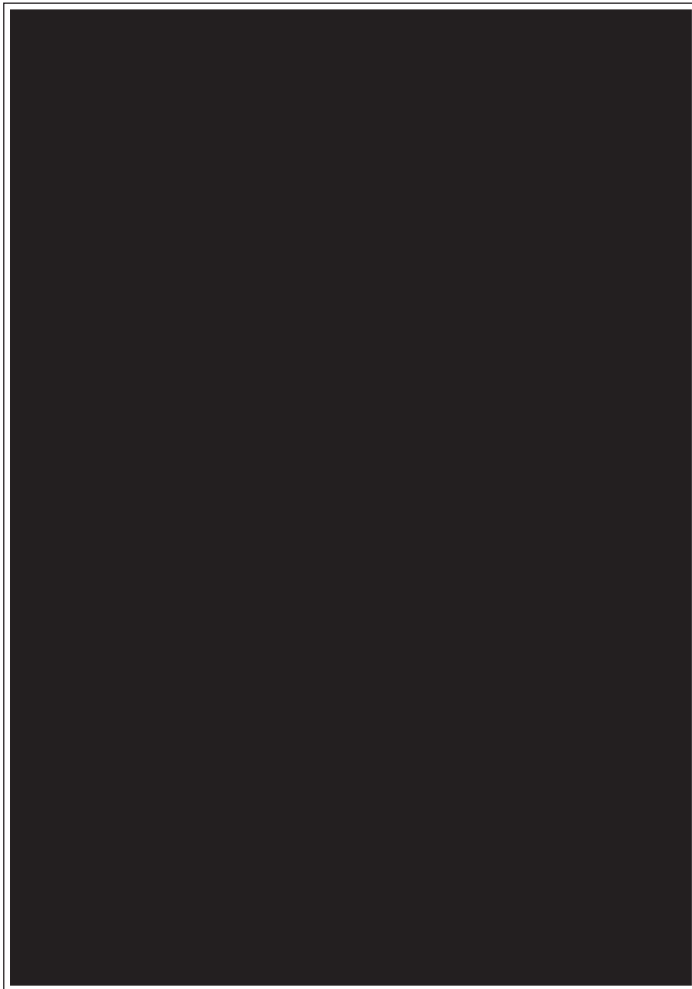
Fe, an MS in Physics from Notre Dame University and an MA in School Administration from the University of Denver. His first teaching assignment was at Hanson Memorial High School in Franklin, LA. During his years as a Christian Brother, he ministered in seven high schools throughout the province and the College of Santa Fe in Santa Fe, New Mexico.

Brother Luke Olivas of the St. Michael's Community in Santa Fe, N.M., gives the following remembrance of **Brother Leo Paul** when he was stationed at Hanson High in Franklin, LA:

"His expertise in various fields bulks large in his daily routine; teaching was always his major concern. And in this he was most thorough and demanding but always approached his students in his usual gracious manner. On the occasion of his Golden Jubilee, four of his former students from Hanson, now all doctors, came to celebrate. Dr. Fernandez made the journey from North Carolina, Dr. Phil Daspit from Arizona, Dr. Eddie Guy Bell, and Dr. Eddie Hale from Louisiana. Their wives were also present for the get-together. What

these doctors loved to recall about their years at Hanson Memorial were their National Championships in debate in Washington, D.C., in 1960, and the National Championship in Baltimore, Maryland in 1961 where they garnered first place in public speaking in the Lincoln-Douglas Debate. The late Brother David Tejada, who was with Brother Leo Paul at that time, use to recall that he drilled his debaters continuously through the week, including Saturdays and Sundays.”

All life is a journey and Brother Leo Paul loved to travel. When a person is born there is the passage from life in the womb to life in the family. When one goes to school there is the journey from



Touring the town of Gilsdorf, Germany in 1994.

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life in the family to the larger school community. When one follows a particular vocation there is the long journey to live out the particular commitments of that life. When one retires there is the journey from clearly defined work to a life asking for new creativity. All of these journeys can cause one to conclude that life is a continuous journey; a passage from one stage of life to the next. In preparing for a trip, **Brother Leo Paul** showed the same thoroughness with which he approached the academic world. No stone was left unturned in his preparations for a journey. Beginning in 1984, **Brother Peter Dudenheffer** accompanied **Brother Leo Paul** on journeys that took them to twenty-three different states and overseas to Germany. Their trips across the continental USA were taken in an old blue pick-up that had been converted into a camper with a jeep in tow. **Brother Leo Paul** preferred not to stay in hotels and liked the idea of “roughing it.” In fact when **Brother Leo Paul’s** health began to fail during the last year, **Brother Peter** said: “**If there are going to be any trips in the future the hardest part will be to get him to agree to stay in motels.**” The following is a sample of some of the places they visited in the United States: Fairbanks in Alaska, the Grand Canyon, Boston, Las Vegas, Little Big Horn, Oklahoma City, Yosemite National Park, Phoenix, Yellowstone National Park, Salt Lake City, Jackson Hole and as **Brother Peter** expressed it: “**everywhere in Colorado and New Mexico.**” During the summer of 2000 **Brother Leo Paul** wanted to make a trip to Canada but his health would not permit it.

Brother Leo Paul was also a skilled mechanic, carpenter, electrician, and in most areas of construction. **Brother Paul Walsh** who lived with **Brother Leo Paul** for a number of years gives the following remembrance:

“**He was super organized. He was not like some of us, classifying things on top of miscellaneous. If one needed a tool or material, Brother Leo Paul**

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knew just where it could be found and offered it along with advice on how to use the tool or just what would be an improved way of doing the job one turned to him for.”

Brother Leo Paul was always on the look out for vehicles, especially from army surplus, which could be repaired for use in one of the Brothers schools or community. Many school athletic teams traveled in buses that were kept up by **Brother Leo Paul**. As with everything he did, thoroughness was again his trademark.

The spiritual journey is at the heart of human wayfaring; it is the core of the human adventure. What about **Brother Leo Paul** and his spiritual journey? Did it have the same thoroughness as did his academic, recreational, and skilled labor journeys? In Christian terms, the spiritual journey is the lifelong process of disclosing and incarnating, in all dimensions of life and the world, the image of **God** which each person has most deeply experience by the indwelling of **God’s** own spirit. On April 24, 1994, **Brother Leo Paul** wrote a spiritual piece called “**Eternal Presence**.” After his death it was found among his personal papers. In it **Brother Leo Paul** gives us a glimpse at his own spiritual journey and his image of **God**:

“Dear Beloved Of My Creation, You are Mine. Before I formed you, I knew you. And before you were born, I consecrated you. (Jeremiah 1:15) You did not choose me, I have chosen you. (St. John 15:16) I love you. (St. John 15:4) I have called you by name. (Isaiah 43:1)

Because you are precious to me and honored, I love you. (Isaiah 43:4) I have loved you with an everlasting love, so I continue to show you my constant love. (Jeremiah 31:3)

How can I abandon you? My love for you is too strong. (Hosea 11:8) Can a woman forget her own baby and not love the child she bore? Yet, even should she forget, I will never forget you. I can never forget you. See, I have carved you on the palm of my hand. (Isaiah 49:15-16)

Do not let your heart be troubled. Trust in me. (St. John 14:1) Do not be afraid, I have redeemed you. (Isaiah 43:1) For I, the Lord your God, am holding you by the right hand. (Isaiah 41:13) I am with you. (Isaiah 43:4) And be sure of this, I am with you always until the end of the world. (St. Matthew 28:20) I will help you. (Isaiah 41:14) When you pass through deep waters, I will be with you. Your troubles will not overwhelm you. The hard trial that comes will not hurt you. (Isaiah 43:2)

Do not worry. (St. Luke 12:9) Even the hairs of your head have been numbered, so there is no need to be afraid of anything. (St. Matthew 10:30) The mountains may depart, and the hills will be shaken, but my steadfast love for you will never end. (St. John 54:10)

Come, I will lead you into solitude and there, I will speak tenderly to your heart. I will be true and faithful, I will show you constant love, and make you mine forever. I will keep my promise...and you will really know me then as never before. (Hosea 1:14; 19-20)

Sincerely,

I am who am. (Exodus 3:14) I am the Lord, your God.” (Hosea 13, 14)

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One can conclude that this collection of scriptural passages in the form of a letter from **God** must have been of great consolation to **Brother Leo Paul** at a time when his health was failing rapidly. **Brother Leo Paul** concludes the spiritual piece with the words: “**The Bible, Old and New Testament, is always a letter to us from God.**” What is most interesting about **Brother Leo Paul**’s spiritual piece is that from beginning to end he is accompanied by **God** who initiates and empowers each step of the journey; throughout it one can sense the mystery of **God**’s grace. This very thorough man felt **God** to be thoroughly involved in every step of his spiritual journey.

From 1995 until his passing, **Brother Leo Paul** experienced more and more problems with his heart. In 1999 his doctor informed him that there was nothing more that could be done. The doctor encouraged him to slow down. **Brother Edward DeReyna**, who was a community member with **Brother Leo Paul** at St. Michael’s in Santa Fe, New Mexico, gives the following remembrance:

“During the 1990’s, even though his heart problem forced him to stop teaching, he kept on with the repairs of school and community vehicles. My memory goes back to the 1967-1968 school year. It was during Thanksgiving time that we made the move from the old property in the middle of town to the new school on the south side of the city. Brother Leo Paul was one of the leaders in the packing and moving of the many items that had to be moved. After the move was completed in December, Brother Leo Paul spent the rest of the year fixing and adjusting the many things that needed adjusting in both the school and the home of the Brothers. He was a very dedicated, and talented person.”

Those who lived with **Brother Leo Paul** could tell that his health was in serious decline. He began the process of disposing of things and labeling materials in the school shop. **Brother Samuel Martinez** who was **Brother Leo Paul**’s Director for many years had a good conversation with **Brother Leo Paul** on the Tuesday before his death. **Brother Samuel** remembers:

“We spoke about his health, which he stated was not good and he felt that his time would soon be over. When speaking about his health, he was very comfortable in saying that he had lived a good life and that God had been good to him. He did not regret anything in his life and thanked God for it. He stated his great love for the Brothers and all that they gave him. I felt very comfortable after our talk. Two days later Brother Leo Paul asked me to come down to the school shop for an inventory of items that either belonged to the Brothers or to the school. I left him about 4:00 p.m. When Brother Leo Paul did not show up for supper, Brother Luke Olivas went in search of him and found him on the pavement between the house and the shop. Mary Cohen, a visiting nurse, gave CPR to Brother Leo Paul but it was too late. Brother Leo Paul had made that last journey to new life. In his life, Brother Leo Paul believed in the God who would carry his journey to completion. As we, the survivors, continue our journey may we, like Brother Leo Paul, travel with the assurance that we are not alone.”

Visitation was on Sunday, October 8, 2000, at the College of Santa Fe Chapel, where a rosary was recited at 7:00 p.m.

The Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated at 9:00 a.m. the next day and was followed by interment in Rosario Cemetery in Santa Fe, N.M.

May he rest in peace.

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



**Eulogy for Brother Leo Paul Gilsdorf
October 5, 2000**

I have been asked to speak to the family and the brothers about Brother Leo Paul. And, I am happy to be able to do this.

On the part of the Brothers of the New Orleans-Santa Fe Province, may I extend my condolences to Brother Leo Paul's brothers and sisters and all his relatives but, more so, to express the gratitude of all the Brothers for the gift the family gave us all in the person of Brother Leo Paul, and also your brother, Felix, who is still with us. We have, indeed, been privileged to have such a dedicated and gifted individual to labor along with us over the 56 years that Brother Leo Paul was a Brother of the Christian Schools.

This past summer Brother Leo Paul celebrated 56 years as a Brother and 49 years of final profession. Paul Gilsdorf, after three years in our Junior Novitiate in Las Vegas, received the habit in Lafayette, Louisiana, on August 14, 1944, and was given the name Brother Anthony Leo. After Vatican II, when it was recommended that we reassume our family names, Paul chose to keep "Leo" as so many knew him by that name and just added "Paul" to it. In this age of temporary commitments, his fidelity, that is, his faithfulness, his dedication and responsibility to his chosen way of life, is in some way quite outstanding. Imagine a vowed life in community with Brothers of varying temperaments, in eight different apostolates, and in teaching elementary through high school, and even college.

Last night we learned a good deal from Charlie, Rose Mary and others of the family about this very private, yet accomplished individual. I have but little to offer other

than an appraisal of just what Brother Leo Paul meant to his Brothers in community and the institutions in which he labored. I lived with him for only one year in New Orleans, at De La Salle, where he was one of two Assistant Principals, and for several years here at St. Michael's, when he was in charge of the motor pool, during my years as Principal.

Brother Leo Paul was a very gifted individual. He had a rich deep bass voice and besides enriching our liturgies, he was also part of singing in Denver each Christmas and Easter, at Las Golondrinas, and with a Choral Civic Group in Santa Fe. I understand that he could play the violin before he left home and I am sure that from heaven he appreciated, if that is the word, the singing at last night's Rosary Service, especially his nephew's song of friendship.

He was super organized. He was not like some of us, classifying things on top of miscellaneous! If one needed a tool or material, Brother Leo Paul knew just where it could be found and offered it along with advice on how to use the tool or just what would be an improved way of doing the job one turned to him for.

He was such an accomplished person in crafts and he was so adept in carpentry, electricity and electronics, and most elements of construction, that early on he was dubbed "THE MASTER." He was a master mechanic, often tooling parts he could not purchase. He was very generous with his talents whether it be as a cook, barber, watch repairer, and so much more. He handled our automobile licenses, insurance, and occasional insurance claims.

In the classroom, his main strengths were in physics and higher math, but he doubtlessly handled most of

the elementary courses when he was in Bernalillo and perhaps, Landry and Hanson...“the Hanson.” It was in this latter school that he monitored the debate team and is the only Brother I am aware of whose students not only were State Champs (Louisiana) but First Place winners in the National Finals in Washington. All this from that very small school in Franklin, Louisiana.

His German temperament characterized his teaching... stern and demanding, but he was also compassionate. The loyalty of many of his students - one most recently invited him to her graduation as a doctor of medicine at UNM - his championship debaters, all doctors not lawyers! - and the many friends in Santa Fe, speak well for his caring for his students and others with whom he had to deal. These few instances and the reference Charlie made to the many letters from former students which Brother Leo Paul showed him in recent years attest to his influence on his students.

I am sure that Brother Leo Paul was “one of a kind” - *sui generis*, his own self. I recall a little scene from the movie “Music of the Heart” where the students were asking their teacher to be her usual, stern, firm, saying it like it was, self...and not like most of their teachers...soft and too easy...because they ‘appreciated the variety.’

In community he was prayerful, faithful, to his community and school obligations, but very private so that, as with most of us, his religious faith and feelings were personal. Most of the older ones among us were brought up to be punctual, responsible, and, should I say, to keep our emotions and religious faith and feelings personal, to ourselves and our God. You married men know it has taken the love and warmth of your spouse and your children to make the expression of your feelings and

emotions comfortable and ok.

Leo Paul...you will be missed in many ways by each of us. The schools, and the College of Santa Fe, in which you labored have benefited greatly from both your skills and your dedication.

May the angels lead you into Paradise, as in our closing song last night, "*Que los angeles le conduzcan al Paraiso.*"

Welcome home, good and faithful servant. Enter into the Joy of your Lord!

Brother Paul Walsh, FSC
St. Michael's High School
Santa Fe, New Mexico



Brother Leo Paul enjoying one of his favorite past times.