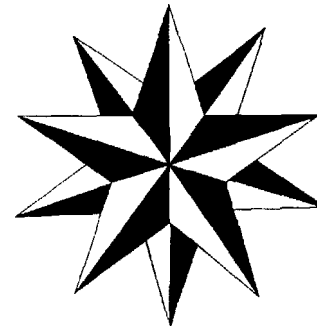


**A SHORT ACCOUNT**

**OF THE LIFE**

**OF**

**Brother Joseph Porter, F.S.C.  
(Anselm Alban)  
1925 - 1995**



**SIGNUM FIDEI**

## TOUR OF DUTY

- 1945 - New Iberia, Louisiana  
(St. Peter's College)
- 1946 - Las Vegas, New Mexico  
(Scholasticate)
- 1948 - New Iberia, Louisiana  
(St. Peter's College)
- 1950 - New Orleans, Louisiana  
(De La Salle High School)
- 1954 - Lafayette, Louisiana (Junior Novitiate)
- 1957 - Vocation Director (West)
- 1961 - Vocation Director (South)
- 1963 - Rome, Italy (Second Novitiate)
- 1964 - Lafayette, Louisiana  
(Director of Junior Novices)
- 1965 - New York, New York  
(Manhattan College - MA Theology)
- 1966 - Lafayette, Louisiana  
(Director of Novices)
- 1968 - Rome, Italy (Study)
- 1969 - Santa Fe, New Mexico  
(Formation and CSF instructor)
- 1971 - St. Louis, Missouri  
(Providence Community)
- 1975 - Lehigh University (MEd)
- 1976 - Lafayette, Louisiana (Prison ministry)
- 1977 - Lockport, Illinois (Prison ministry)
- 1978 - New Orleans, Louisiana  
(Prison and poverty ministry at Hope  
House, Bywater, St. Thomas)
- 1991 - Ethiopia (Missionary)
- 1992 - Metairie, Louisiana (Medical)
- 1993 - Denver, Colorado  
(St. Joseph Community - Outreach)
- 1995 - Lafayette, Louisiana (Infirmiry)  
(Died November 8)

## PUT IT THERE, BROTHER

**I guess a real prize moment came at a prison where I was known as Mr. Porter. A black inmate I had befriended and helped in a special way, reached out his hand and said with thanks in his eyes, "Put it there, Brother!" He gave me the title, not because it was proper and expected, but because I had earned it.**

This is what Brother Joseph Porter wrote in a farewell letter of October, 1995 and which he asked to be sent to selected friends after his death.

## WRITER'S APOLOGY

Brother Joseph Porter and I shared three months in the Novitiate in Lafayette, Louisiana, in 1942; he was a postulant, I was a Novice. We were in the Scholasticate in Las Vegas, New Mexico, in 1943-44 and in 1946-47. We taught together in New Iberia at St. Peter's College 1948-49 and 1949-1950. We made final vows together in Santa Fe, New Mexico, on July 3, 1950. Again in 1954-55 and 1955-56 we were on the teaching staff of the Junior Novitiate in Lafayette. In 1964-65, Brother Joseph served as Director of the Juniorate and I was in the Visitor's Office at De La Salle Christian Brothers. We were also together when Brother Joseph was Director of Novices during 1966-67 and 1967-68. From 1981-1987 when he was doing his work in Adult Education, Prison Ministry, and Justice and Peace advocacy in New Orleans, I was again Visitor of the District and wassupportive of his work. In 1987, I fulfilled my desire to serve in Nigeria in West Africa. And in 1991, Brother Joseph fulfilled an ambition first expressed in his "preference" in 1976, when he checked "Missions." He was accepted as a volunteer

(1)

to Ethiopia in East Africa. I think I can say that I knew Brother Joseph Porter quite well and it is my hope, as I use some hours during my medical leave in Lafayette, that I can pay some small tribute to the unique and admirable life of fifty-three years as a Brother of the Christian Schools that Brother Joseph led with great devotedness and unselfish and unassuming dedication. (January, 1997 - *Brother Raphael Bodin*)

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Brother Joseph Porter died among his Brothers at De La Salle in Lafayette, Louisiana on November 8, 1995, at the age of seventy years and five months. He knew he was slowly dying when in July he called the Brother Visitor, Brother Donald Mouton, and asked him to come to the Lafayette Retirement Home because he was deteriorating so fast he could no longer cope with utter weakness and inability to do any work. He was fully aware of what cancer was doing to his body. This feeling he verbalized in the first paragraph of the same letter quoted above:

**When you receive this I will have exchanged my grubby khakis for celestial dungarees. (I'm not floating around the clouds in the nude for all eternity, especially in the shape I'm in. Looking around here at some of the others, they're not much better off either. Seeing them could make the ecstasy of being sanctified an eternal agony. It's not for me! Yes, let's have a dress code and it better be more than one style of fig leaf.) And also I'll demand, in pious Gregorian tones, of course, an ample supply of angelic wing de-icer. You see, I hope to do some mighty high flying with Archangel Michael and the soaring Seraphim.**

(2)

It is clear that his physical deterioration was most un-nerving, since Brother Joseph had always presented an image of energy and youthfulness. The last three months of his life were particularly difficult.

He was welcomed into the retirement home (Magnolia, as it is called) in July, 1995. When his pain and the progress of the cancer became alarming, he was put in Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital where he was cared for in the facility for the terminally ill. After only a few days there, he requested to be brought back to Magnolia. For some six weeks he faced death and endured the pains with light heartedness, courage and great faith. Professional nurses cared for him. Some say he was not easy to deal with. He had certain things he wanted to do before he died and it was not always easy for his care-takers to respond to his demands. Although usually gentle, he had always been positive, if not aggressive in his thinking and now he wanted others, particularly friends, Brothers and former co-workers, to share in his passing. It was surprising to some that he wanted to celebrate his death (have my funeral) before his death. He arranged to have a wonderful and joyful gathering of some of his former Novices; had a Mass of the Resurrection in his room; had visits from outstanding people with whom he had worked; carefully prepared his funeral by selecting hymns and readings; almost drove the Brother Visitor's secretary, Brother Tom Kane, to distraction with his meticulous planning. This was his way of confronting his death.

Incidentally, Brother Tom Kane preceded him in death, suffering a heart attack on a plane while returning to his office in Lafayette on October 2, 1995, just five weeks before Brother Joseph's death. Tom was there to welcome Joe when his time came to enter the next life.

In Brother Joseph's case, the relentless medullary thyroid carcinoma took its toll in a relatively short three months.

In the letter of farewell, Brother Joseph looked forward to his new activities in Heaven. His had been a turbulent life here below with many moves and some disconcerting "job hunting." He did not expect to be at rest, but in his usual graphic and picturesque style he could say:

**Once there, I won't be soaring and flitting about always. I won't be under any pressure to do anything special. I'll spend lots of time pondering and thanking God who has allowed my life to be happy, interesting, useful, and full of love. Being a Christian Brother has been a marvelous adventure.**

Those were the end days. But it might be well to begin at the beginning.

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Joseph George Porter was born on May 30, 1925, in Holway-Taylor, State of Wisconsin. He was the son of George Porter and Martha Landolt. Mr. Porter died when Joseph was a young boy. The family moved to Longmont, Colorado. Mrs. Florence Porter Busche, Brother Joseph's sister, supplies some details.

**Joe was born in Wisconsin, but shortly after, we moved back to Omaha, Nebraska, where Father (George Porter) originally lived, since conditions were quite harsh there. However, Father died at the age of 38 when Joe was 3 years old. From there we took the train with Mother to Longmont, Colorado, to live with our maternal grandparents. She obtained a job as housekeeper with the priests of Long-**

**mont. Grandmother would take us to town on Saturday afternoon, so that we could stay overnight at the rectory and go to Church on Sundays. Then Mother married Patrick Ryan in 1936.**

This marriage blessed Joe with two half-brothers and two step-sisters: William, Michael, and Elizabeth Ryan and Sister Magdalene Ryan, O.S.F. Brother Joseph kept in close contact with the family and particularly with Mrs. Busche whom he visited whenever in the Pittsburg area. In the final two years when Brother Joseph was back in Denver, there are many references to his visiting the family in Colorado and particularly to being with his 95 year old mother: "took Mom to eat"..."drove Mom home"...

**Meantime, Joe went to a two-room country school across from Grandparents' farm for his first two years. Then , with the priests' help, we attended grade school at St. Clare's orphanage in Denver. During the summers we lived with our grandparents on their ten-acre farm.**

It is interesting to read how Joe himself evaluated his orphanage days in an article he sent to the Denver Post in January, 1995. This was in response to an article by Craig Bowman in his column of 1/26/95 in praise of his time spent as a child at St. Clare's and Mullen Home for Boys. Brother Joseph wrote:

**I join Craig Bowman in his praise of the orphanages. I too was with the Franciscan Sisters and the Christian Brothers at their respective institutions where I received much love, education and training from dedicated caregivers. Few kids elsewhere enjoyed the**

**opportunities given us: a complete range of balanced sports, music, scouting, religion, diet, etc.**

Back to Mrs. Busche's letter:

**Joe did all the chores that go with rural life, including driving 15 head of milk cows to a pasture one mile down the road. Received 15 cents a cow a month. He also had to pump water from a well to water the animals and the flower garden that Grandmother had in the front yard. He also assisted Grandfather in his blacksmith shop, which was tough, as he had to endure his impatience. However, Joe never complained. Mother and Patrick Ryan moved to a lake property in Longmont area where he was maintenance man. It was there that Brother Joseph (recruiter for the Christian Brothers) came to see the family and received permission for Joe to enter the novitiate. (I was rather resentful at the age of 17, as I had hoped Joe would become a priest.) That was what he portrayed when we would play together in the smokehouse at our Grandparents' farm. However, I changed my mind in later years. It was 15 years before I saw him again, but we made up for lost time in the years that followed.**

From St. Clare's Joe was admitted into J. K. Mullen Home for Boys in Denver, where he entered High School (1939-40). It was at Mullen that Joe came into contact with the recruiter, Brother Abadire Joseph Durand. Upon completion of his sophomore year in 1940, Joe entered the Junior Novitiate at Sacred Heart Training College in Las Vegas, New Mexico.

He finished high school there and then went to Lafayette, Louisiana, where the New Orleans-Santa Fe District of the Christian Brothers had its Novitiate. After a three month Postulancy, Joe was vested in the habit of the Brothers on August 15, 1942. He was given a "religious name" that he used for the next twenty years, Brother Anselm Alban. He was called Alban in the places in which he worked until 1963.

After his first vows on August 15, 1943, Brother Alban returned to New Mexico and to the College Scholasticate in Las Vegas. College courses were followed from 1943-1945 and then, according to the Formation process of those times, a year of practice teaching took place during the scholastic year, 1945-1946. His assignment was to St. Peter's College in New Iberia, Louisiana, where brother Alban taught third grade. This "College" was a parochial school, grades 1 - 12. By his own admission, Brother Alban learned much about teaching techniques in this classroom of forty ten-year old boys.

Brother Alban returned to Las Vegas in June of 1946 and spent the next academic year studying for his B.A. in English and History. This was the final year for the Brothers' Scholasticate of the College section of De La Salle Normal School known as Sacred Heart Training College. In September 1947, the College closed and all records, staff and students transferred to St. Michael's College in Santa Fe, New Mexico. Brother Alban got his B.A. from there in 1948, a member of the first graduating class of what is now the College of Santa Fe.

He was again assigned to St. Peter's College in New Iberia and again taught in the elementary classes. Brother Cyril Ory was Director-Principal at that time and recalls Brother Alban as a serious, methodical, and devoted teacher. He believed in order, and in community spent hours on Saturdays trying to tidy up the Director's Office. This was also the time he began to take a real interest in library work where he could organize

and classify. In succeeding years, he organized libraries wherever he taught. From 1952 to 1955 during the summer months, he studied at Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge until he was awarded the M.A. in Library Science.

It was in his final year at St. Peter's that an unfortunate boating accident claimed the life of a 20 year old Student Brother in the community. Brother Bertrand Scheberle was doing his practice teaching at St. Peter's during that academic year. Brother Alban, like all the community, was deeply impressed by this premature and unexpected death. At the time, Brother Alban was doing a serious discernment of his life in preparation for final vows and it has been said that it was while kneeling at the side of the coffin of this young Brother that he made his final commitment to the Brothers for life. But it was only after the thirty-day retreat in Santa Fe during June of 1950 that, on July 3, he formally pronounced his final vows in the Institute.

At twenty-five years of age, Brother Alban had spent three years teaching in elementary classes. He was old enough to be a big brother to his students and young enough not to intimidate them. He was judged mature enough for high school teaching and was assigned to De La Salle High School in New Orleans where he spent the next four years of his teaching career. English and religious teaching were his daily fare and he must have been very earnest and possibly demanding in his efforts, since he remarked later

**... on Valentine Day, my sophomores in New Orleans placed a nice wrapped gift on my desk with a note reading, "Here's our heart for you" ...a whole can of it: RED HEART DOG FOOD. (Had I been barking at them too much...?)**

In 1954, Brother Alban was 29 years old and entered into a second phase in his life -- an involvement in Vocation and Formation ministry.

He was still teaching in High School, but left De La Salle High School in New Orleans for De La Salle Junior Novitiate in Lafayette. There young men desirous of becoming Brothers were received, and were taught the high-school curriculum, as they prepared for a religious vocation as Brothers. Teachers also guided the young men in making a choice for the Religious Life. Classes were small. The personal contact was intense.

Brother Alban found time to devote many hours organizing the Library. From 1955 to 1957, he served as Sub-Director.

A summer spent at the Fifty-Days Retreat on Beaver Island prepared him for the next step. He was assigned to be Vocation Director in the Western sector of the District. Until the end of 1960, he was based at Mullen High School in Denver and fostered vocations in the states of New Mexico, Colorado, Arizona, and Wyoming. It was in Arizona that Brother Alban had an adventure with his second-hand car. It gives one the flavor of his many trips and entry into unknown and distant cities:

**The old car locked up and the back wheels would not move. To tow the flivver into town (near Phoenix, Arizona) would have cost a fortune and even then parts would have to be obtained from Phoenix. The labor and the hotel bills would have been prohibitive so selling the crate seemed the only solution. Naturally in a God-forsaken spot like that, you are really over a barrel and everybody knows it. There was not a used car dealer in the**

**whole joint so an offer of \$30.00 from the guy who offered me a ride was the best I could do. The tires alone were worth more than that but what can you do? It's an awfully helpless feeling a person experiences at such a time, but I've learned that a sense of humor at such times keeps you from working up a sweat.**

**(What Brother Alban says indicates he traveled pretty much with empty pockets... no credit cards),**

**My trip in Arizona was quite adventuresome, at least after the breakdown. I hitched a ride into the lumbering village of Show Low on a logging truck; got another ride on a mail truck to Holbrook; then was able to go by Greyhound to Santa Fe. Luckily the trouble developed only after I had finished my work in Arizona. From Santa Fe, I hoped to go to Denver to try to find a good car deal there. But with Brother Felix Gilsdorf's blessing I got a good deal on a Lark.**

(Brother Felix is a real Studebaker buff... best car ever made.)

Brother Alban appears to have been quite successful in his recruiting efforts and certainly made an impression on the people engaged in the same sort of work. He won the cooperation of the diocesan authorities in the dioceses and in most of the schools that he visited. There is a letter from the Denver Archdiocesan Director of Vocations that testified to his effectiveness: (To the Brother Provincial)

**It is a privilege and a pleasure to be able to write you this note. I am happy to have made**

**the acquaintance of your Vocation Director, Brother Alban. He has worked in the diocese and has done a splendid job and has impressed not only the teachers, Sisters and Priests, but also the students with whom he has worked...I certainly would like to have Brother Alban here on a full time basis if it were at all possible by your order...(Feb. 15, 1950 - Father C. B. Woodrich)**

Vocation work brought Brother Alban into close contact with the Junior Novitiate in the West, at that time housed on the campus of the College of Santa Fe. In August of 1958, he wrote a long letter to the Brother Visitor offering suggestions and some criticism of the running of the Juniorate. Certainly, the Brother Visitor must have recognized he had someone with possibilities for Formation work and from that time, definite steps were taken to prepare Brother Alban for that work.

December, 1960, the Brother Visitor suggested that Brother Alban move to the South as Vocation Director. Brother Alban answers, "I have no great difficulty in making the switch in the vocation set-up... Of course, I am a bit curious to know why the new man would not simply replace the southern man... I rather like the prospect of having a chance (possibility) to see if the South can produce vocations."

In the summer of 1961, Brother Alban was again at De La Salle Christian Brothers in Lafayette as Vocation Director for the southern sector of the District. He remained in that capacity until the summer of 1963. He also taught summer courses to the Juniors during those years.

It was during this phase of his life that Brother Alban took to writing. He contributed articles to various diocesan papers on the vocation of the Brother. His writing was clear,

imaginative and inspiring. He did his share of argument trying to bring out the relevance and importance of the Religious Lay Brother in the mission of the Church. A collection of what he wrote during the next forty years, even his monthly contributions to the District Newsletters, would make an interesting study. He seems to have adopted as his motto this short saying in his notes:

**If you must write - copy, steal, imitate, quote, use your imagination, but above all, be interesting.**

"How's your French?" was the question put to Brother Alban in May 1963. "Plans are for you to make the Second Novitiate in Rome from September 1963 to June 1964. French not too good." But is essential to follow the course. So spend the summer in France getting adequate proficiency."

Brother Alban made the Second Novitiate with a group of 70 Brothers from 55 Districts and of 23 nationalities, seven of whom were Americans, one being the Superior General Brother John Johnston. Brother Clodoald of revered memory was Director in his sixth year at the head of the program to which he had given a new thrust. From the letters Brother Alban wrote back home, it is quite evident that his focus was still vocation work and formation processes. Since Vatican II had just concluded and the Institute was seriously preparing for the General Chapter of 1966, Brother Alban was also forming his own ideas on the shape of the Institute of the future and the new trends in formation which were going to influence his future work.

However, Brother Alban was not yet the "prophetic" figure he was to become. An American co-novice writes:

**I was with Joe Porter during the last of the all-French Second Novitiates in '63-'64. It was an exciting time because of the many transi-**

tions and rapid changes taking place in the Church and in our Institute. The so-called American delegation were a close knit group mostly engaged in formation at the Scholasticate level back in their home districts. Brother Anselm Alban was that legendary model of proper conduct and RULE keeping behavior we used to read about in the lives of the saints.

During that year in Rome, immersed in French culture and language, living in Rome and adhering to the numerous local house regulations and spiritual exercises scheduled daily by the Regime and the masters of the Second Novitiate, many Brothers of all nationalities were often impatient, frustrated and downright depressed. Alban, never. He was consistently smiling and cheerful, quietly effective in all the many household chores we had to perform. His was a smooth temperament, never complaining and completely lacking in any form of sophisticated criticism. His American mates considered him uncomplicated, and simple in the best sense of the word.

In later years I was privileged to meet him in New Orleans when he was working with the very poor. He maintained that utter simplicity of manner, cheerful, generous, understanding. And he always managed to "keep it simple."

Correspondence at this time between Brother Alban and the Brother visitor indicated a definite plan for the following years. There is a rather direct sentence in a letter of January, 1964, from the Brother Visitor:

**I don't know what the future will have in store for you, but it might be good for you to prepare yourself as much as you can do to train our future Brothers....Although Brother Gabriel is doing well in the novitiate we might be looking for a replacement in 3 or 4 years, perhaps sooner.**

A pattern of jumping from one course, or workshop, or University to another sets in. All this "flitting around" as Brother Alban himself put it -- was to prepare him for the position of Director of Novices.

At the end of the Second Novitiate (June 1964), Brother Alban spent several months at Catholic University in Washington following a course set up by Father Sloyan in Catechetics. By mid-August he was back in Lafayette to take on the direction of the Junior Novitiate while the Director at the time made the Second Novitiate.

By the summer of 1965, it was decided that Brother Alban would become the Director of Novices in 1966, so the final preparatory step would be to follow the M.A. course in Theology offered by Manhattan College, New York City. He was also urged to make use of break times to visit the various Novitiates in the United States. He was impressed with the staff of the various Novitiates. He suggests to the Brother Visitor the increasing of staff in our Novitiate and the enriching of the offerings to the Novices by way of conferences and courses.

This was also the time when there were plans to build a chapel at Magnolia. The previous Visitor had launched a drive. Now Brother Alban was concerned about design, keeping with liturgical reforms and modernity. He suggested hiring a capable

architect and use of Rambusch for design. The new Brother Visitor, (August, 1964) answered rather laconically -

**Your remarks on the chapel are duly noted. I have filed them. But do bear in mind: 1st, no 25 in the Novitiate - no chapel; 2nd the little matter of a need for about 75 grand more in the kitty. 3rd, I have not checked out the Brothers you suggested for the Novitiate...to some souls, you know, the mere mention of Novitiate makes them blanch.**

In reality, the chapel project was abandoned and it took a while to get more personnel to help in the Novitiate.

Brother Alban was very happy with the Theology program at Manhattan and was awarded the M.A. in Theology at the end of the summer 1966. During that year the 39th General Chapter of the Institute took place and Brother Alban was in a good position to follow what this session produced in the way of documents and orientations for the future. And he could discuss these matters with key participants in the Chapter from the New York area.

Brother Alban came to Lafayette in August to replace Brother Gabriel Daigle who for fourteen years had introduced young men into the life of the Brother. Some 145 members of the District in 1966, almost 50% of the membership at the time, were novices under the direction of Brother Gabriel. His were big shoes to fill.

During the summer of 1966 a special effort had been made to create a separate program for the Postulants. Brother Cassian Lange was Director of the program and Father Hodous, S. J., was called to give an introduction course in Theology to the Postulants. Twenty four young men were anxious to start

the Novitiate after 10 weeks in a very enriching program. They were a very promising group and prospects for the new Director looked good. The Novitiate year started off with special solemnity because the newly elected first American Superior General, Brother Charles Henry Buttmer, was in the sanctuary to give the religious habit to the Postulants on August 16th at St. John's Cathedral in Lafayette.

A letter of August 30, 1966, informed the Brothers of the District that Brother Joseph Porter was appointed to the District Council by right of office and would use the name Joseph Porter instead of Anselm Alban.

Brother Joseph threw himself whole-heartedly into the work of the Novitiate. He implemented many of the recommendations from Formation experts. He opened up the perspectives of the Novices to a broader view of their mission in the Church. He established an excellent rapport with the group. He knew how to call in helpers for special lectures and activities and tried to develop personal initiative on the part of the Novices.

It was during this year between sessions of the 39th General Chapter during which so much discussion about renewal and adaptation in the Institute was taking place that Brother Joseph worked at setting up a "new style" Novitiate. He was praised by some and criticized by others. But he guided the group of Novices to first vows and fourteen of the group made first vows on August 17, 1967.

Reading the district Newsletters of the time gives the impression of much enthusiasm and joy in the group and perhaps a bit of euphoria about "casting off the old" and "introducing the new." The Novitiate was a microcosm of the "aggiornamento" of the Church in post Vatican II days. But long-term commitment was not the strong suit of youth of the

middle and late sixties and Brother Joseph suffered many a disappointment.

June 10, 1967, was the beginning of the Postulancy for a new group of twelve young men. Again the postulancy program was separate from the Novitiate and was directed by Brother Cassian Lange. On August 14, 1967, twelve were given the habit of the Brothers at St. Genevieve's Church in Lafayette. The next day they began the Novitiate year under the Direction of Brother Joseph. It was during this Novitiate year that the second session of the 39th Chapter was held (October 1, 1967 - December 15, 1967). Brother Joseph read extensively, consulted other formators and attempted to implement what the Chapter said about renewed formation processes.

The postulancy program for 1968 began on June 9 for fifteen young men. Since the Junior Novitiate had been closed at the end of May, the Postulants took over the vacated building and enjoyed the use of more spacious accommodations.

The second group of novices directed by Brother Joseph made first vows on August 15, 1968. They numbered eight. This was the last Novitiate Class Brother Joseph directed. He had developed a strong spirit of unity and brotherhood among these men and he also kept in contact with them for many years. An assessment of the spirit in the group can be gathered from what one of them wrote in 1991. By that date only four of those who were novices during those two years were still Brothers, but they determined to have a 25- year reunion and they published a little booklet of letters for the occasion. This is a quote from one of the letters:

**Throughout the past 25 years one thing mysteriously guided and forged the disciplines, the leadership, the love of family, and that's the spirit of the Brotherhood - our Brotherhood. It was seemingly suppressed that day**

**I walked out of the gate at the end of "Oak Alley." It secretly resurfaces during those moments when the heart is still and memories of De La Salle and "my" Brothers flood back to reassure and nurture. To an outsider or to those who haven't experienced that miracle it would be hard to explain, how ten men could bond, I feel, in a special love that defies the definition that exists.**

Brother Joseph must have been particularly happy on the occasion of this reunion. What he tried to instill had borne fruit in those lives.

The thirty-ninth General Chapter had established a six month program in Rome for Directors of the Houses of Formation from September 1968 to February 1969. Sixty Brothers from 6 continents converged on Rome. Brother Joseph left Lafayette to attend this session for formators. It is not clear that he was to return as Director of Novices after the session, but much took place during that year of absence.

Brother Hilary Townsend was named Director of Novices for 1968-69. Of the twelve who began the Novitiate, eight took first vows in August 1969. In the meantime, Brother Joseph had returned in February and was temporarily assigned to St. Michael's High School in Santa Fe. He was to replace a Brother who was sent to the 100-day session at Sangre de Cristo Center for Renewal. He confesses to the Brother Visitor: "All my life I have taught English and Religion. Teaching history and particularly the history of New Mexico will be a challenge, but I'll do the best I can."

June 7, 1969, at the conclusion of the first District Chapter as mandated by the 39th General Chapter, Brother Francis Beck was elected Provincial. Brother Hilary Townsend was

named Auxiliary Provincial. He directed the group of Novices until August, and this was the final group to make the Novitiate in Lafayette. Both the Postulancy and Novitiate programs were moved to Alexis Hall in Santa Fe, where the Scholastics continued their college studies at the College of Santa Fe. Brother Joseph was assigned to help in the Formation program.

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But a movement towards a new emphasis in his life was inexorably taking place during these years. The soul searching is described in an article about Brother Joseph which appeared in the New Orleans Times Picayune in June 1989:

**The '60's was an era of turbulence both abroad and domestically. It was during this time that Brother Joe Porter was battling his own demons. A Christian Brother, Brother Porter was questioning his ministry and how well he was fulfilling the cause of Founder St. Jean-Baptiste de la Salle, whose aim it was to educate the disadvantaged.**

A group of Brothers had formed a community in St. Louis, Missouri, the Providence Foundation, whose ministry would be direct service to the poor and neglected. Brother Joseph joined this community during the summer of 1969, and even when he returned to Santa Fe in the formation program, he sought a prison ministry at the New Mexico State Penitentiary in cooperation with the educational programs offered to prisoners by the College of Santa Fe. Others in the formation program could feel that his interest was slipping away from this work and into this new type of ministry. Brother Joseph was forty-five years old, a time when many men question the direction their lives are taking. He returned to Providence during the summer of 1970. His primary concentration was in the prison ministry. Back in Santa Fe during the scholastic year 1970-71,

he seems to have decided to request full time assignment to Providence. From September 1971 to February 1975 he was a member of the community. He taught some classes in the school, did adult education and had a job at the Minimum Security Institution.

The search for a ministry faithful to the Founder continued and Brother Joseph asked to make the renewal program at Sangre de Cristo Center from February to May, 1975, to clarify his thinking.

The attraction to prison ministry was still strong. Since for Brother Joseph the focus was education he was convinced that the work was in the tradition of the Institute and the education goals of the Founder.

Feeling the need for training in the field of prison ministry, Pennsylvania and LeHigh University beckoned. While serving in the St. Gabriel system and Gaterford State Prison, Brother Joe followed the courses offered at LeHigh and got an M.Ed. in Social Restoration in 1976. Brother Joseph then returned to Louisiana to work in the Parish Prison from November 1, 1976, to July, 1977. During the academic year 1977-78, he held the De La Salle Chair in Social Justice at Lewis University in Lockport, Illinois. Then from June 1978 - March 1981 he served at the Orleans Parish Correctional Center in New Orleans.

Since much of his life was spent in prison ministry, an assessment of his performance and some comments by himself can be injected in the narrative at this point. The first quote is from a prison official when Brother Joseph moved to another area:

**You were the most valuable and valued asset that the New Mexico Educational Department possessed. You are one of those rare individuals -- a born teacher who is highly com-**

petent and professional, and loves his work. During the course of your classes, you have taught many people and taught them well, but your instruction did not end there, you were always willing to help residents outside your class room, and made that willingness known. Your door was always open to those who sought assistance. You restored hope and lost confidence to many; you instilled new confidence in many; your services were invaluable in developing Prison library resources. You found time to assist the residents of cell block three with their educational problems and inspired many of them to attend school after their release from that unit. Perhaps most important of all, you, through your dedication and sincerity, have convinced the residents that you care for them.

Here is what Brother Joseph said in an article for the newspaper commenting on his ministry to prisoners:

**I've been in prison for years.....I guess I never learn.... I think, "What am I doing here anyway? What good can possibly come out of my being in such an institution? ....." These places are ghastly: so dehumanizing, so debasing..... So what am I doing in this prison? After all, I haven't been sentenced. I have been hired by the sheriff's department as a teacher-counselor.... Unfortunately, idleness is consistently imposed administratively on rehab employees to the degree that it is stymying us and systematically driving us out.... Persons behind bars have been judged, condemned and often rejected.....However, it is not hard to like prisoners, even to get close**

**to them..... A Brother need have no ulterior motive for caring about one or many inmates; he can get to love them because they are fellow human beings.... Whether he works with Anglos or Native Americans, Blacks or Chicanos, he can, like Christ, "go about doing good." Sometimes he deals with Christians, often with Muslims, occasionally with Jews, and even with atheists. Christ was not particular with whom he chose to mingle, so one who calls himself both a Christian and a Brother can do no worse.**

In the seven or eight institutions in which Brother Joseph served he was no stranger to being abruptly terminated. He was often a job seeker. At one time he was the only member of the small community he was part of who earned any money. He was very conscious about not relying on the Institute or District completely for support. His was a unique role in practicing Religious Poverty.

**Because a Brother is a member of an order, he does not have to worry about a high salary even though he may be highly trained. Also, he is an expendable member of the staff who can afford to take stands on questionable prison practices. He can afford to lose his job.**

In some quarters of the District, small communities of Brothers in direct service to the poor or who shared common educational goals were being promoted. In 1981 Brother Joseph and two other Brothers became convinced that to serve the poor effectively and convincingly, they had to share the lot of the poor by living in their neighborhoods and in conditions similar to their fate. Community was formed successively but

temporarily at St. Vincent de Paul Rectory, at the St. Jude Centre, and in the Bywater District of New Orleans, Louisiana.

But the most important move came when an invitation dated December, 1982, came to the small group from Sister Helen Prejean of "Dead Man Alive" fame. The message was addressed to "the Big Three" living on Dauphine Street.

**What if the three of you came to live here and work more closely with us here at Hope House...Think what new dimensions we could give to INTER-COMMUNITY. Do you have the feeling that we are forging a new expression of religious life -- men and women emerging from primary communities with a common thrust for faith and justice. It's just a seed. Think about it. Losing Cory and K activates me to seek out new resources. That's You."**

In 1969 two Catholic nuns had moved into the St. Thomas Housing Project in New Orleans, taking an apartment among the almost completely black community of people in this housing development - the projects - a black ghetto. The efforts on the part of the government to establish low cost housing had unfortunately resulted in overcrowding, neglect, and high incidence of unrest and crime. The needs of the people in regard to literacy, job training, aid to broken families, health services and legal aid against injustice challenged the people on the staff of Hope House. Brother Joseph was one of the Christian Brothers who joined in these efforts and lived in an apartment in the projects as part of Hope House from July 1983 to 1989. Brother Joseph considered himself as part of this Christian Community's history and even when he was assigned elsewhere he joined in the celebration of 25 years of Hope House and posed for a photograph with the people on the staff as late as 1994. The most common image of Brother Joseph during the years at Hope

House is tutoring in the Adult Education section, serving on committees promoting justice for the black population, voter information and registration, working in the prisons, and meeting individual needs in housing and employment as they presented themselves.

The General Chapter of 1986 invited the Brothers to a process of Conversion. When the District held its Convocation on November 29, 1986, at St. Paul's in Covington, Brother Joseph spoke in answer to the question, "How am I answering the Chapter's call to Conversion." He gives his personal plan. It is a statement that gives insight into his personal spirituality and life goals.

**I believe I am called to identify as a Christian Brother with marginalized people. My personal plan calls for me.....**

- (1) to live in a housing project among poor and disregarded people,**
- (2) to serve as part of a team to operate free schools for adults who have not finished high school,**
- (3) to involve myself as Jesus, the new Moses did, with persons who are despised, abused and rejected: namely, prisoners, gay men and lesbian women, and persons dying with AIDS.**
- (4) to contribute positively to a community life that tries to live gospel values, to listen to the message God sends through the poor we encounter daily and to pray as a providentially assembled group,**
- (5) to set aside a daily sacred time to read Scripture and to pray meditatively,**
- (6) to work seriously at interesting at least one person to join our ministry as a Brother or as an associate,**

**(7) to do more and more to shape a model of religious living with like-minded men and women who search for community with meaning, and simplicity with good humor.**

**I have no great desire to be a prophet, but as a Brother we are all called to that role.... The message is clear: be of service. Be a Brother. And of course, be a Christian. I hope my conversion will lead to this. This is not the time for timid souls. History is being made. I have no ambition to be one of its casualties. (District Day South, November 29, 1986)**

Just how well this sixty-one year old "convert" lived up to his plan is the story of his life.

In 1989, the District Administration decided to appoint Brothers to minister to our own schools and to the Brothers' Communities in the area of Social Justice and Service to the disadvantaged. Brother Joseph Porter was named Director of Justice Education and also served as Associate Director of Vocations in the New Orleans area.

It was in 1989 on the occasion of the meeting of the National Association of Religious Brothers in New Orleans that Brother Joseph was the recipient of the Healer Award. The citation on this award reads:

**Joseph Porter, a member of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, manager of Hope House Adult Learning Center in New Orleans. No stranger to the classroom and the importance of education on every level, Joseph taught in a variety of Colleges while at the same time**

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**taught at a number of penitentiaries. Joseph was chosen for the Healer Award for his example of being BROTHER to the powerless: the poor, the imprisoned and people with AIDS. By his presence as teacher and counselor he brings life and hope to those he comes in contact with.**

Publicity in the Times Picayune drew a response from Brother Joseph thanking them but also pointing out the erroneous reference to him as: Clergyman gets award.

**I am not, as stated, a clergyman. There are no clerics in the Christian Brothers' Institute....Sometimes people call me Father or Reverend or simply Rev., as do the prisoners when we first meet. Everyone is trying to be respectful. But I smile and tell them, "I'm a Brother. I've worked too hard at being a Brother to let you get by with calling me Father.....I am not available for weddings, funerals, etc....."**

In the summer of 1987, Brother Joseph claimed his right to a Jubilee Sabbatical. He used the months to visit those areas of the Institute and the world where he believed he would find apostolates and individual Brothers engaged in them that appeared most faithful to the new thrust of preferential option for the poor that was emphasized in the General Chapter of 1986.

He visited Singapore, Malaysia, India, the Philippines, and Guatemala. He was particularly impressed by the work of Brother James Klimpton in India in establishing self-sufficient and sustaining basic villages for poor people in India (RTU - Reaching the Unreached.) It made him dream, not that he could imitate this endeavor, but then again, what about the Missions before he got too old?

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When in 1991, UNESCO awarded the 1990 NOMA prize for outstanding work in the cause of literacy to the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, Brother Joseph rejoiced and was much encouraged in his firm belief that this was the direction in which the Institute should move in the years ahead. It may have had something to do with his request to work in the overseas apostolates where programs dealt precisely in basic education for the poor and neglected in primitive settings.

In his role as Director of Justice Education Brother Joseph spent one year in El Paso, Texas, at Cathedral High School and then moved back into the St. Thomas Community and Hope House in 1990-91. His role was advocacy by word and example. He gave conferences and talked to schools, and took an active part in current movements in the Church.

Some of the causes he espoused were controversial, one of which was involvement with the organization called "Dignity," a support group for gay Catholics who felt alienated from the Church because of their sexual orientation. Although the Catholic branches of the movement had the approval of local Bishops, because of some statements on the national level, it was suspect by many. Some Brothers were concerned and the Brother Visitor sought clarification from Brother Joseph. A letter of January 6, 1982, years before his role on the District team, was his reply to the Brother Visitor's inquiries.

**Dear Raphael, Thank you for the IDEA link copy including a chapter from Rueda's book, The Homosexual Network in the Catholic Church. I have sent for the book so as to be sure of all he has to say.....**

**First of all, I think Dignity has much to recommend it. I have been connected with it since 1971 and have been vice-president, secretary, and board member of the New**

**Orleans Chapter. It was Dignity that gave me my first insight into a segment of the population I had heard about but knew nothing about. It was in St. Louis that I first thought to become informed about "those people" who were said to be an alienated group. In time I began to realize much of what they spoke about was what I found within myself. I never suffered because of my orientation as many had, nor did I feel the pain of rejection by the Church -- the religious life preserved me from so much. But I did begin to discover myself. I am forever grateful to the organization for what it has done for me, but also for making me aware of the discrimination, hatred and violence gay people are subjected to. In no small part the Church and the school have contributed to the persecution of a group of persons who never chose to be homosexual. After all one does not choose their sexual orientation any more than one chooses the color of his eyes or the size of his feet. I did not give much thought to this before I began attending liturgies and meetings of Dignity -- incidentally made up of an amazing number of former seminarians and religious. I am committed to the organization because I've seen the workings of grace so often in people who had learned to hate themselves, society and the Church of so-called religious people.... I am sending you the recent report commissioned by the Archdiocese of San Francisco....Incidentally, I attended the regional conference of Dignity in San Antonio. Archbishop Flores wrote a fine letter of encouragement.**

Brother Joseph became involved in helping people with AIDS when he learned that a former student from De La Salle needed help coping with the disease.

True to his goal of helping young people, Brother Joseph was concerned about teen age suicides among gay youth. He was alarmed that suicide is the second leading cause of death among the nation's youth.

**There are a lot of wounded kids ready to end it all...Any counselor, and that means parents above all, can be of great help if they will simply try to understand, not judge nor condemn nor display horror..... Gay teenagers are indeed among the loneliest people in the world.**

The focus is always helping people, not promoting causes, and very much less trying to justify aberrant behavior.

It was also the role as Director of Justice Education that led Brother Joseph to visit the communities and speak to school groups and write articles. His theme was the same: Do we identify with the poor? Do we welcome the marginalized of society? Are we afraid to stand up for those whom society rejects? What does a Christian School committed to Justice look like? In a paper given to Lasallian school faculties, Brother Joseph gives not ten commandments but eleven considerations which could be easily construed as the basic criteria by which to qualify a school as committed to Justice:

#### **SOME QUESTIONS ON SOCIAL JUSTICE**

- 1. Does the school perpetuate the myth of materialism and individualism as a special virtue by idealizing hard-driving competition as "the American way"?**

- 2. Does the school contribute to continued prejudice against persons because of their ethnic background, racial origin, sex or sexual orientation, alien culture, economic status, mental ability, previous record, domestic situation, political connection, etc.?**
- 3. Does the school tend to glorify the gifted at the expense of the average while being indifferent or even cool toward the less gifted?**
- 4. Does the school exploit its employees and/or students by exacting sacrifices from them while refusing to search for ways to operate more simply and to economize?**
- 5. Does the school reinforce rich, culturally conforming Christians in their resistance to what committed Christians see as the real demands of followers of Christ?**
- 6. Does the school participate in waste by little or no recycling of materials; by using throw-away items where permanent ones could serve; by over using lights; air-conditioning, heating, gadgets, etc.?**
- 7. Does the school recognize that crime is much the product of the tendency of many Americans to idealize tough aggressiveness, rugged and selfish individualism, and the quick resort to violent solutions of their problems, while self-righteously blaming others for social ills?**

8. Does the school, on the other hand, see that crime is struck at its roots by neighborly helpfulness, community responsibility, rigorous honesty, generous tolerance of others, modest self-appraisal, simplicity of life and gentle reasonableness?
9. Does the school use the Word of God shamelessly (Anita Bryant syndrome) to validate evangelical conformity to the world's pattern and values, thereby condoning and even blessing the nation's most brutal sins?
10. Does the school give its unqualified blessing to capitalism claiming it to be the system that has made America great?
11. Does the Christian school discredit or establish the credibility of the love of God in a suffering world?

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January, 1991 -- Brother Joseph is thinking of Africa. His preliminary inquiries in 1990 had resulted in an invitation to work within the Delegation of Ethiopia. As a preparation for this new ministry, he was admitted into a thirty-day program of Discernment and Preparation in Moraga, California, conducted by the Maryknoll Center for Mission Studies.

His own reaction to the program which went from June 19 - July 18 is contained in his discernment statement: **Three elements lead me to think of Africa. My agreed-on two years as director of Justice Education were up; Don Everard decided not to go to Africa; and there was a call for**

## Brothers in Ethiopia.

Now my question became: am I choosing Ethiopia as an escape? I had loved my work with prisoners, with educationally needy adults, and with persons with AIDS. I got less satisfaction out of my last two years as part of the Provincial Staff. I planned to come to Maryknoll mostly to confirm what I had already decided upon -- to go to Ethiopia. However the prerequisite psychological evaluation shattered my casual approach. My motives, my ministry, my lifestyle, my judgment were all called into question. Obviously, I did not know myself very well.

I want very much to be authentic and God-seeking in this venture but could I be blind to who I am and who God is for me? I claim to hate hypocrisy, phoniness, dishonesty, self-aggrandizement -- yet might I be practicing all of these?

In meditation, I dwelt on the blind man who wanted to be part of the action, cried out, was hushed but kept at it until Jesus cured him. Then the man followed Jesus, but not really knowing where it would all lead. In praying and silence, I hear, "Come follow me."

I have heard the invitation to Ethiopia and I believe it answers my (1) desire to support an emerging African Church; (2) desire to see our Institute revitalized by the Third World; (3) need to be part of the new Church; (4) need for an alive and life-giving Church; (5) identification with the blind man who cried out, in

**spite of attempted silencing, received his sight and followed Jesus, and (6) need to learn from the poor and oppressed.**

**With Mary, who knows her children so well, even those who have neglected her so long, let me be where I must be. I pray she will take my hand. She is the wise one, and with wisdom comes good judgment.**

**I know it is necessary to maintain stateside friendships, make friends and become part of a support network in Africa, delve more into male spirituality and continue subscriptions to publications that inform and energize me. I feel I must reach out for friendship and sharing. To be of service, I cannot allow myself to become a prisoner of the community/school compound.**

Those who knew Brother Joseph were not sure of the robustness of his health. He was 66 years old. They had seen him "black out" on occasions. But the medical report said:

**Brother Joseph Porter is a patient of mine followed in this office since 1981. He was last seen and examined on June 3, 1991. His diagnosis at that time was hypoglycemia. He is in good health.**

On August 27, 1991, Brother Joseph was in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, and on August 30, he was in Meki, where he was assigned to be part of a community of three: another American Brother, a young Ethiopian and himself.

He describes the "compound" in these words:

**The mission compound consists of a school, a clinic, an experimental car and a food distribution center.....Life in Ethiopia is beyond the comprehension of most Americans (I am sure he is speaking of village life as experienced in Meki)....Cleanliness is relative because water is a precious commodity....Poverty is appalling but it doesn't entail the spiritual debilitation common among the urban poor in the United States....(Brother Joseph is doubtless comparing the people in Meki to those in the projects or in jails with whom he was familiar.) Ethiopians in the villages have not been robbed of their pride, dignity, and a chance to work....everyone is doing something.... They have suffered for a long time, they still know how to smile.**

During the months in Meki, Brother Joseph lived up to his statement: "To be of service I cannot allow myself to become a prisoner of the community/school compound." The monthly notes he sent in to the District Newsletter testify to a wide range of activities and involvement in the local community. English was the language of the school, but translators allowed him to become a community leader of sorts in many family and civic affairs. He confesses to be handicapped since he did not know the national language or the local dialect.

But his first stay was quite short. In late December, after only four months, Brother Joseph came down with malaria and then a bout of pneumonia. The Brother Visitor was informed that the decision had been made to return him to New Orleans on February 6, 1992. He took up residence with the community at Archbishop Rummel High School and entered Oschner Tropical Medicine Clinic for extensive tests. The battery of tests indicated rather critical health problems.

**Patient was seen by Dr. Dalivisio and a tender nodule was noted in the right neck. On February 24, 1992, he was seen by Dr. Butcher at which time the mass is described as 3 X 2 cm. in size in the jugular lymph node chain in anterior triangle of the right neck. Fine needle aspiration biopsy that day was interpreted as being consistent with a papillary thyroid carcinoma. On February 27, 1992, patient underwent a total thyroidectomy and radical neck dissection....Fifteen of 22 lymph nodes recovered in the radical neck dissection contained metastatic tumor....Mr. Porter has had no hoarseness, pain or difficulty swallowing....Patient is an alert well-appearing man who responds appropriately....There is no adenopathy in the neck or in the supraclavicular or axillary areas....The cords are clear and move symmetrically. The respirations are normal at rest. The abdomen is without masses. The extremities are without wasting or edema. There is weakness of the right 11th nerve function, but apart from this there are no evident neurologic deficits.**

The report ends with the statement:

**Patient plans to return to Ethiopia on Saturday May 22, 1992. Will contact physicians there and us when symptoms arise. Progress of disease can be monitored by Calcitonin level and chest X-ray as well as by physical exam and symptoms.**

So after three months of treatment, Brother Joseph is back in Meki, Ethiopia. He did not return empty handed. 76

boxes of clothing and text books and library books were on their way to Meki. Lykes Brothers Steamship company were shipping them for free to his mission.

June, 1992 -- February, 1993 are thoroughly documented in the monthly newsnotes that Brother Joseph faithfully sent to the District Newsletter. In his first letter he tells of a triumphal entry into Addis Ababa. Of course, it was not for him but was the welcoming of the newly appointed Bishop of Meki back from his ordination in Rome. Brother Joseph had traveled with him from Rome not knowing who he was. It was Brother Joseph's sixty-seventh birthday on May 30, the day of his arrival and he gives himself up to fantasy that the 4000 people who met the plane at the airport had come to welcome him and celebrate his birthday. From Addis Ababa to Meki was a great celebration but Brother Joseph broke loose from the crowd, and the welcome he got from his co-workers in Meki who had missed him for the months he was away was a little less dramatic but just as heartfelt.

During the next eight months, Brother Joseph continued his ministry of service to the most needy. His boxes of books, clothing and the money he had gathered enabled him to help many people. He could now pay more attention to the school library. The donated books made it very attractive to the children who gathered each evening under his tutelage to explore the riches of so many books other children far away had thrown away.

The small community of two American Brothers and one Ethiopian were very much encouraged by the visit of two American Visitors, Brother Vincent Malham and Brother Donald Mouton. They were visiting the Brothers of their districts working in overseas apostolates before the regular school year started on September 28, 1992.

Brother Joseph was kept busy arbitrating differences between people who seemed to be quite confident that the deci-

sions and advice of a white man, especially a man of God were oracular. He became the one who could be called upon for services like driving, care for minor ills, troublesome wives or husbands, wayward children -- a town counselor of sorts. And he did not even speak their language and all conversation was carried out by intermediary of a translator. But everyone could understand the language of the heart.

In February, 1993, he tells of a case of a "blackout" of a woman found prone outside their house needing to be revived. The Sisters of the Clinic revived her, diagnosing dehydration and near starvation. She was rather quickly on her feet, in fact walked away from the Brothers' house carrying on her head the bag of supplies Brother Joseph hustled up for her.

Then the account shifts rather abruptly to his own troubles:

**Back to blackouts; this time mine. I was returning home for lunch after a morning session at the school. While crossing the playground, I began to have spots before my eyes....then, bingo, I collapsed....later, in mid January, I was in Addis Abada for my periodic medical check-up. On the way to the doctor, I gave my Ethiopian driver a first-class scare by blacking out....and slumped over next to him on the front seat....It was determined that my condition was nothing a shot of dextrose could not straighten out....However, the doctors suggested I get back to the States.**

So March 1993, Brother Joseph is back at Rummel High School in Metairie for medical tests at Oschner Clinic. He writes that, "I am feeling fine and functioning well, but my days in Africa have, sadly, come to a close."

By June, Brother Joseph is already thinking ahead to his Golden Jubilee of Vows. Some of his friends receive a letter:

**It was August 1943, at the age of 18 in Lafayette, Louisiana, that I took on the vows of a Brother of the Christian Schools. The ensuing fifty years have been stimulating, grace-filled and rewarding....God has blessed me with a life of amazing variety....My life has been enriched by students I have dealt with, the novices I had, the prisoners I taught, the friends I've made, the benefactors I've appreciated, the Brothers I've been associated with, the mentors I've followed. I've been particularly blessed by sharing in the lives of God's dearly loved people, the poor....Of course, the confusions of the present and the forgiveness of the past are moments of growing in grace. The path has not been, and is not now, straight and even....I have stumbled and will continue to stumble, physically, emotionally and spiritually....My goal, as on the day of my first vows, is to become the person God wants me to be, so he may recognize me on the final day....Join with me on August 15 the feast of Mary's Assumption in prayers of thanksgiving to God for the great goodness and happiness shown to me during these wonderful years of brotherhood.**

When the actual date of jubilee celebration came, Brother Joseph was a member of the St. Joseph's Community in Denver. A small community of three (two Brothers and a volunteer) was carrying out what Brother Joseph believed would be the shape of the future of the Institute.

Brother Joseph again turns whimsical when he writes of that day of celebration.

**August 15 was some jubilee celebration! What a fuss! It was downright embarrassing. Not only do thousands of young people show up, but President Clinton puts in an appearance, and then John Paul II pops in to celebrate an outdoor Mass for an estimated 375,000 guests. Quite humbling to say the least! They never should have gone to all that trouble.**

Of course, what Brother Joseph is referring to is the tremendous turn-out for the celebration of World Youth day held in 1993 in Denver, Colorado. And it appears that he participated in the front of the T.V. set.

He writes:

**I continue to wallow in idleness. I await phone calls from places where I have put in my application for work: Adult education, prison-related ministry, etc...I read a lot.**

Actually, Brother Joseph was far from idle. The articles he wrote for the Newsletter indicate that he was successful in getting into Adult Education. He was employed and as he says "earned his keep" at the Adult Learning Source. Denver was also rich in opportunities to participate in Dignity, in ministries for minority groups in a cosmopolitan city, victims of AIDS and assistance, including Meals on Wheels, to the elderly and shut-ins. It also turned out to be a good opportunity to be closer to his aged mother and the family who still lived in Longmont.

Brother Joseph remains a "recruiter" at heart. A letter

written to "Dear Brother", the extent of circulation unknown, states:

**You like the West. You've always (or maybe sometimes) wanted to live in Denver. Now's your chance. We, the St. Joseph's Community, are inviting -- with Brother Visitor's encouragement anyone who would like a new experience in a small community to join us....Present ministries involve classroom teaching and running the physical education program at a Catholic inner-city parochial school, instructing foreign born adults in English, preparing people for the GED, private tutoring, delivering meals to old people, and neighborhood improvement ventures.**

**As a community we are serious about our prayer life and our being together as Brothers of De La Salle. We attempt to be supportive and present to each other and allow for outside interests as well. It's a good place to be. Why not join us -- in the shadow of the Rocky Mountains!**

Brother Joseph doesn't elaborate on what was a very simple life style -- no outside employees, domestic help, cook, etc., and a sincere attempt to live within a very restricted budget supported by their employments.

Despite the fact that he was not well, Brother Joseph completed the 3-year cycle in LaSallian Studies known as the Buttimer Institute during the summer months. He followed the session at St. Mary's College in California until it ended on July 14, 1995.

He seemed to be quite busy writing, giving homilies,

and corresponding with lifelong friends. He had not stopped dreaming up new projects.

A playlet he composed at the Buttimer Institute dramatized the exchange of letters between St. La Salle and Gabriel Drolin in a modern setting and in contemporary language. It is easy to see that he considered Gabriel Drolin a prototype of the Brother who pioneered and took risks and suffered misunderstanding, even from the Holy Founder. His admiration was great and perhaps he resonated with this heroic Brother who tried to be faithful to his vow to do everything to establish the Institute in Rome.

His last project which he had, perforce, to leave to others to complete also started at the Buttimer Institute. It was a proposed media blitz responding to the question:

"Does America need a contemporary De La Salle!?"

He launched this project in a homily on July 11, 1995, after asking his listeners to consider the sad state of education in general, and particularly neglect of the underprivileged that is the condition of the United States of America.

**America must not be noted for its ignorance.  
Ignorance is revolting. Who will lead the  
revolution?  
Where is the modern-day De La Salle?**

He had a new series of drawings of De La Salle as patron of Teachers done by the artist Suzanne Novak and tried to interest other Brothers in the project -- alas unfinished.

Perhaps we can still hear his voice from beyond the great divide:

**Can we hope such a person will soon  
emerge?  
Do we need a modern-day De La Salle?  
Where is he (she)?**