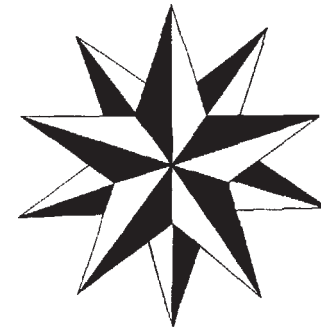


**A SHORT ACCOUNT**

**OF THE LIFE**

**OF**

**Brother Bernardo Roybal, F.S.C.  
(Julian Roybal)  
1903 - 1998**



**SIGNUM FIDEI**

## Tour Of Duty

1923 - Bernalillo, New Mexico (St. Nicholas School)

1928 - Lafayette, Louisiana (De La Salle Christian Brothers)

1950 - Bernalillo, New Mexico (St. Nicholas School)

1952 - Lafayette, Louisiana (De La Salle Christian Brothers)

1998 - Died December 6

In John Pielmeier's stage play *Agnes of God*, Doctor Livingston asks Mother Meriam: "Do you think saints ever existed?" "Yes I do," Mother Meriam responds. Dr. Livingston asks: "Would you like to become one?" "Become one? My dear, one does not become a saint; a person is born a saint," Mother Meriam responds. Dr. Livingston presses on with encouraging words: "You could try! You could try to be good!" Mother Meriam answers: "Goodness has very little to do with it; some of the saints were a little crazy. But, they were souls completely attached to God; attached to God at birth." On December 6, 1998, such a soul passed into eternity.

Brother Bernardo was born in Embudo, New Mexico, on September 24, 1903. He was the son of Antonio Roybal and the former Emilia Duran. He is survived by his brothers, Jose and Emilio Roybal of Santa Fe, New Mexico.

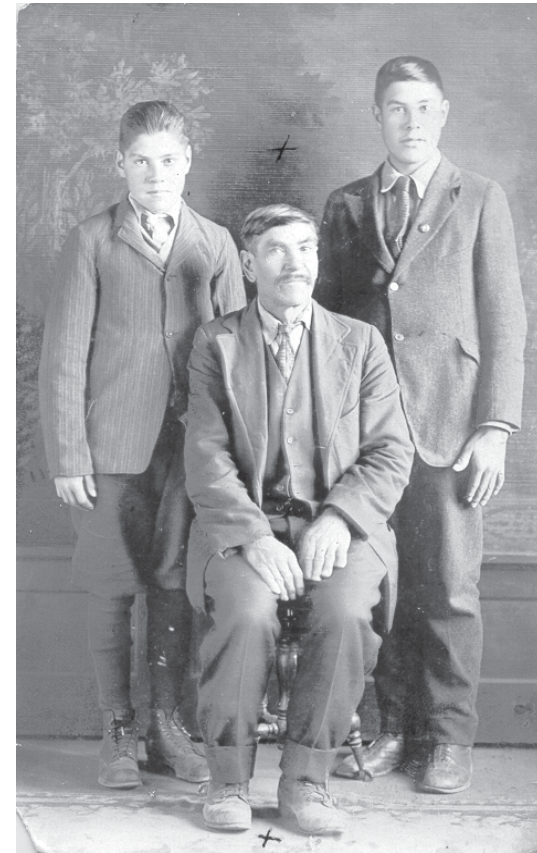
Brother Ralph Baltz, who was Brother Bernardo's Director for some sixteen years recalls his conversation with him about his family:

**"In our periodic dialogues Brother Bernardo spoke freely and enthusiastically about his early life in Embudo, New Mexico. Besides the episodes of happy family life, he recalled the difficulties of crossing the Rio Grande by horse and wagon, of the little chores on his father's farm, of his injury that left him limping the rest of his life. It seems his father sent him into his barn yard to feed the animals, telling him not to be afraid. He wasn't paying attention when a large goat rushed at him and butted him on the hip."**

Among his family members, Brother Bernardo was considered, at an early age, to be a person close to God. His brother Emilio recalls their mother saying: "Julian is a saint. He lives peacefully and humbly in a type of prayerful solitude."

Early in 1920, Brother Bernardo's younger brother Gregorio preceded him in entering the Christian Brothers. Brother Bernardo

was very close to Gregorio and missed him very much. His father, sensing Julian's loneliness asked: "Do you want to join Gregorio?" He answered: "Yes!"



*Brother Bernardo (Left, Age 18), with his Father Antonio (Center) and younger brother Gregorio (Right)*

In 1921, at the age of seventeen he entered the Brothers Junior Novitiate in Las Vegas, New Mexico. On October 22, 1921, he received the religious habit of the Christian Brothers. His final profession of vows took place on August 18, 1928. Throughout his seventy-seven years as a Christian Brother, he was stationed in only three places: Las Vegas, New Mexico, Bernalillo, New Mexico, and Lafayette, Louisiana. He was a resident of De La Salle - Christian Brothers of Lafayette, LA, for seventy years.

It was while stationed at St. Nicholas School in Bernalillo, N.M., that he had another injury that probably contributed to his stooped posture in his later years. Brother Ralph Baltz gives the following information:

**“During his time at Bernalillo when he was helping Brother Nazaire harvest the hay crop, Brother Bernardo fell head first from the loft down onto the hay wagon. He didn’t say how much or how long he suffered; he simply let me know something of his past.”**

From 1928 - 1950, Brother Bernardo was stationed at De La Salle in Lafayette, LA. Brother Ralph Baltz gives us insight into those years:

**“The spirit of faith and obedience must have been very profound in Brother Bernardo. He often recalled his early years at Magnolia under the care of Brother Anatolien Alfred: years of the Depression and of frugality in every form. He was never bitter or complaining -- merely frank about the amount of work exacted of him in those 18-hour workdays that usually began with 4:30 rising (1:30 a.m. on laundry day when he had to get up to start the fire in the boiler so that work could go “full steam” right after breakfast), and included gathering garden produce, storing it, preparing it for the kitchen, and often canning it late into the evening. As he recounted these things (3)**

**to me he would just smile, shake his head and seem to gently convey to me the satisfaction of ‘those were the days -- hard days under brother Alfred’s care.’ He was grateful for them and for what he accomplished. During all my years with Brother Bernardo, I never once found him resentful, cross or ill-humored. A quick wit and a ready smile were characteristics of this humble man.”**

In 1950, Brother Bernardo was transferred again to St. Nicolas School in Bernalillo, NM. The year 1952 saw him back at De La Salle in Lafayette, LA. This time he would remain at De La Salle for the remainder of his life. As always, Brother Bernardo took delight in hard work. Brother Daniel Duplantis provides the following remembrance:

**“When I think of Brother Bernardo, I can’t help but think of service and a man who has mastered what Wilfred A. Peterson calls the ‘Art of Work.’ Work has always brought Brother Bernardo to life; it has been the means he has used to ‘set himself in motion’ day by day; it has always been the means for his ‘prayer without ceasing,’ his offering, his way of showing that he cares.**

**He made himself what might be termed a ‘career laborer’ among the Christian Brothers. He worked with enthusiasm and gusto. But the mastery of work brought about a deeper transformation in the life of Brother Bernardo; his whole life was one of love. Love for God, love for his Brothers and love for all men were totally evident in his life. From this great love has proceeded a tremendous service which was admired by all.”**

On the occasion of his seventy-fifth birthday the following testimonial was given at the banquet in his honor. It gives us some insight into (4)

Brother Bernardo's personality:

**“He’s either praying or working! That’s what it looks like, anyway. If you don’t find him in the garden or in the kitchen be sure to look in the chapel before checking his room. This regime of PRAYER and WORK from his earliest youth has made of Brother Bernardo a most peaceful religious and a most helpful confrere.**

**He is serious but never despondent; he is solemn but not dismal; he certainly is not a prophet of doom since he is so gracious and full of joy; he is not morose nor of a dour disposition since one feels at ease in his presence and even elevated at being in contact with such a great man of God. There never seems to be an anxious frown on his brow but always a very quiet smile which radiates sunshine wherever he goes without blinding others with a make-believe veneer of ‘jolly good fellowism.’ His is a genuine PEACE engendered by a generous spirit, a willingness to give himself for others, and a deep faith in God.”**

Brother Bernardo also took great joy in music. Brother Ralph Baltz recalls:

**“He learned how to play the harmonica, the ocarina and the recorder. We delighted to hear the melodies of Christmas carols, sacred hymns and patriotic songs that came from his room on Sundays and holidays, when he had more free time.”**

Brother Louis Welker, Brother Bernardo's director for the last ten years of his life, gives these observations concerning Brother Bernardo's love of music:

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**“Quite often he would sit in the community room and watch the Country Western music channel. Frequently, at the end of a song he would say: ‘too sad’ or ‘ good beat.’ In the community chapel he would always take part in the singing. When he didn’t know the melody, he would keep time with a graceful movement of his hand. He loved the Christmas Carol: “Il Est Ne”, and would sing it regardless of the time of year. When he was 92, he was scheduled to sing that carol for our neighbors the Discalced Carmelite nuns, during the Christmas season. Due to a cold, the performance had to be cancelled.”**

The advance of old age began to have a debilitating effect on Brother Bernardo. A series of medical problems caused him discomfort, but he never complained. If you asked him how he was doing, his reply was always: “Bueno”, or "Bien." On occasions when he didn't care to take food he would say “mala.” He always wanted to be with the community for prayer, mass, socials, meals and the evening news. Brother Bernardo dragged his weakened frame from place to place, wanting to be present to the community. It was only in 1988 that he stopped trying to do work for the community; it became too difficult for him to get around. On occasion, he would help with the snapping of string beans. By 1993, it was necessary to have a Brother assigned to help Brother Bernardo throughout the day. Brother Jerry Vincent served as his care-giver for the last six years of Brother Bernardo's life. Other Brothers would help out on occasion in order that Brother Jerry could get some rest. Brother Rene Clerc gives the following remembrance of his helping to care for Brother Bernardo:

**“It was far beyond my comprehension when I was a novice, but about two years before Bernardo’s death, I had the opportunity to care for him on occasion. He was always smiling and never complained, even when I walked him out of the room without his shoes on. In a joking way, he exclaimed, ‘Zapatatas.’ When it was my**

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weekend to get him up, I would crow like a rooster when I opened the door. He would respond in kind and begin talking to me in Spanish or French (neither of which I understood), and when I reminded him of that he switched to English. We would sing together and he would laugh the whole while. One day I offered him a ride around the circle in a wheel chair. As we left the building, he told Brother Brendan Martinez, in Spanish, ‘Why is the burro in the back of the cart?’

**That gentle, peaceful, simple, smiling man was truly Emmanuel for us.”**

In September of 1998, Brother Bernardo stopped eating. It was decided that he should enter Lourdes Hospital for tests. The doctor discovered that he had a knot in his colon. Surgery was required to relieve the pain, but it was really the beginning of the end. Brother Bernardo remained in the hospital for some time, but never really regained his strength. With the help of Brother Clarence Fioke, Visitor, the community was able to hire two nurses to care for Brother Bernardo at home. Several times during the next few months it appeared that Brother Bernardo was near the end. Toward the middle of November he no longer cared to eat. Occasionally, he would rally and take some food; his condition dramatically weakened. A few days before his death, he sat up in bed and said: “Coffee time.” For the next few days he rallied, but on the morning of December 6, 1998, he began to slip away. The end was painful for him, and at 2:05 p.m. he entered into eternal rest.

At the homily given by Brother Louis Welker at the Mass of Christian Burial for Brother Bernardo, Brother Louis stated:

**“One of the things that I truly believe is that Brother Bernardo was a Saint. Today we are saying good-bye to a Saint. Whenever I was in the presence of Brother Bernardo, I always had the**

**feeling that I was on holy ground and should take off my shoes. His face was incredibly beautiful! Looking at his wrinkled face and into his eyes, one could see the very light of his soul. So often, I felt that I was looking into the face of Christ. And Christ was looking back at me.”**

In the play: *Agnes of God*, Mother Meriam was questioned about saints. She responded: "Goodness has very little to do with it." This is so true! Our saints still insist how little self-determination contributes to one's growth in holiness. The saints have discovered that God loves us, not because we are good, but because He is. In his Autobiography, *The Seven Storey Mountain*, by Thomas Merton, one reads the words: "The greatest tragedy in life would be not to be a saint." This is one tragedy that Brother Bernardo never had to worry about!

The Mass of Christian Burial was held at 11:00 a.m. on December 8, 1998. Interment took place in Christian Brothers cemetery in Lafayette, LA: Brother Louis Welker, FSC

Director of De La Salle - Christian Brothers  
Lafayette, LA



*Brother Bernardo on the occasion of his Golden Jubilee of Final Vows in 1978  
Left to right: Brothers Adrian Pfarr, Paul Walsh, Thomas Canty, Bernardo, Gregory Wright, Mel Bock*

**Brother Bernardo Roybal, FSC  
(Julian Roybal)**

**September 24, 1903 - December 6, 1998**

Eulogy given by Brother Louis Welker, FSC at the Mass of Christian Burial.

Brother Bernardo came from Embudo, New Mexico. He was born September 24, 1903. At the age of 17 he entered the Brothers Junior Novitiate in Las Vegas, New Mexico. At the age of 18, he became a novice, and at age 25, he made his perpetual profession as a Christian Brother.

In a society where up-ward mobility is an important agenda, Brother Bernardo's life agenda was very simple: God and his Brothers. Throughout his seventy-seven years as a Christian Brother, he was only stationed in three different places: Las Vegas, NM, Bernalillo, NM, and Lafayette, LA. He was a resident of De La Salle Christian Brothers in Lafayette for the past 70 years.

One of the things that I truly believe is that Brother Bernardo was a Saint. Today we are saying good-bye to a Saint. Whenever I was in the presence of Brother Bernardo, I always had the feeling that I was on holy ground and should take off my shoes. His face was incredibly beautiful! Looking at his wrinkled face and into his eyes, one could see the very light of his soul. So often, I felt that I was looking into the face of Christ. And Christ was looking back at me.

Brother Bernardo was never a classroom teacher, but he was a teacher. Throughout the last 10 years he taught me how to recognize the various faces of Christ.

**Christ the Worker:** Brother Bernardo was a "career laborer" among the Christian Brothers. He never looked upon work as a type of slavery or drudgery, but rather it was his mission among the Brothers. Brother Daniel Duplantis described Brother Bernardo's approach to work in the following words: "It was his prayer without ceasing, his offering of self, his showing that he

from work when he was 85. One day I asked him: "How old were you, Brother Bernardo, when you retired?" He responded: "I don't remember." I asked: "Were you 80 or 82?" He responded: "I don't remember." I asked: "Well, did you go to the Brother Director and ask to retire?" He responded: "No, I just stopped working." I asked: "Do you think we will have to work in heaven?" He responded: "You don't understand heaven, and you ask too many questions."

**The Gentle Christ:** Brother Bernardo was always kind toward others, he was never cross with others, and always tried to lend a helping hand. He showed tremendous love for his Brothers. He never spoke ill of another; never condemned anyone; he was gentle. Likewise, no one ever spoke ill of him.

**The Grieving Christ:** As Jesus wept for Lazarus, I saw Brother Bernardo weep when his blood-brother Gregorio passed away a few years ago. He kept saying: "Gregorio is in heaven," and he wept. I had to inform him of Gregorio's death, and over the next few days he would question me as to whether Gregorio had truly passed away.

**Christ, Son of Mary:** Brother Bernardo had a great devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary. God only knows how many rosaries he said a day. The rosary was constantly in his hands. It was a great spiritual experience to watch him saying the rosary. It was like someone savoring a glass of fine wine. He said the rosary very slowly and reverently. He would move very slowly from bead to bead and one could feel his devotion to the Blessed Mother.

**Christ at Prayer:** Brother Daniel Duplantis once said: "If you can't find Brother Bernardo, check the Chapel before going to his room." Brother Bernardo could spend hours in the Chapel and one could sense his union with God. It was made manifest for the good of others. Brother Bernardo wrote: "As a Brother, I learned how to pray and contemplate, to be close to God.

**The Laughing Christ:** Brother Bernardo had a great sense of humor. In a very real way he loved to tease. When I would speak to him in English, he would answer in French. When I would speak to him in French he would answer in Spanish, when I

Spanish he would answer in English. It was a no win situation! Once when Brother Jerry Vincent and I were discussing house finances in the presence of Brother Bernardo, we really didn't think he understood what we were talking about. I mentioned to Brother Jerry that we could make budget if we could cut out, or cut back on a few things around the community. Brother Bernardo responded by saying: "Can we keep the house?"

Lastly, **The Suffering Christ:** The end was not easy for Brother Bernardo. The last two months of his life and especially the last week were extremely painful for him. Several times we thought the end was very close, but he rallied. On the Thursday before his death, we could not get him to respond in any way. I asked him: "Brother Bernardo, if you can hear me wiggle your big toe." He did. I asked: "Brother Bernardo, is the Blessed Mother getting ready to take you home to heaven?" He wiggled both big toes. On the day of his death, he experienced tremendous pain. He was conscious, sitting up in bed. He would grip the railings of his bed to help him endure the pain. It was hard on all present to see him suffering in such a manner, but I began to realize that he was united with Christ on Calvary. He seemed, in our eyes, to be weak, but he was embracing his destiny. I am sure that he offered his sufferings for the good of all the Brothers and those he loved. In 1956, he wrote: "My Lord and my God, even at this present time I accept willingly and with all my heart, from Your hands, the manner of my death. Whatever it may be, when it shall please You to come for me, with all its anguish, pains and sufferings."

In conclusion, for many years Brother Bernardo was the cook at Magnolia. He kept a journal of all his menus. On big feast days, he would write on the menu: "Ice cream for everybody in the house!" So, in honor of Brother Bernardo, after the burial, there will be ice cream for everybody in the house.

I would like to thank all of you for being present today. A special thanks to Brother Jerry Vincent, who was Brother Bernardo's health care giver during the past six years. Also to Ola Fontenot and Shirley Meche, nurses who helped us care for Brother Bernardo for the last few months. Thank you for being here.



*Brother Bernardo  
in  
1973 at age 71*



*At age 94,  
relaxing in his favorite  
chair in the Brothers  
community room*



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