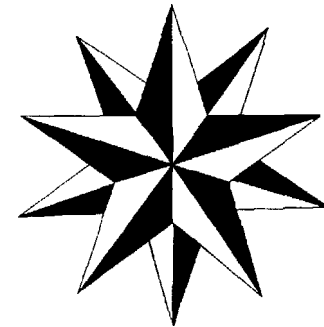


A SHORT ACCOUNT

OF THE LIFE

OF

**Brother August Joseph Valdez, F.S.C.
(Jose Ramon)
1906-1996**



SIGNUM FIDEI

TOUR OF DUTY

1925 - Santa Fe (St. Michael's High School)
1933 - Bernalillo, NM (St. Nicholas School)
1941 - El Paso (Cathedral High School)
1942 - Monterrey, Mexico (Regiomontano)
1947 - Las Vegas, NM (West Las Vegas High School)
1949 - Lafayette, LA (Cathedral High School)
1950 - Santa Fe (St. Michael's High School)
1954 - Franklin, LA (Hanson Memorial High School)
1955 - New Iberia, LA (Catholic High School)
1975 - Lafayette, LA (Holy Family Community)
1977 - Broussard, LA (St. Cecilia School)
1978 - New Orleans, LA (Christian Brothers Academy)
1980 - Santa Fe, NM (St. Michael's Community)
1981 - Lafayette, LA (Holy Family Community)
1984 - Santa Fe, NM (College of Santa Fe Community)
1986 - Lafayette, LA (Holy Family Community)
1991 - Santa Fe, NM (St. Michael's Community)
1996 - Died in Santa Fe July 22

On June 22, 1996, Brother Joseph Valdez, (T-Joe) of St. Michael's Community in Santa Fe, New Mexico, died after having undergone surgery for removal of a stomach tumor. He was 89 years of age. Brother Joseph was blessed by God with a love of the spiritual life. He was a spiritual man who took delight in prayer, meditation and prolonged visits before the Blessed Sacrament.

Jose Ramon Valdez was born in Pojoaque, New Mexico, on December 1, 1906. He was the eldest son of Elias Valdez and the former Lucianita de Valdez. He is survived by his brother, Elias; his nephews, David Gonzales, Manuel Gonzales, Juan Gonzales, and Raymond Valdez; and his nieces, Bertha, Dolores, Patsy and Diane.

Early Life: 1912 - 1919

In his memoirs Brother Joseph gives the following account of his early years:

I did a little to help in the house like kindling the fire, which my mother had taught me how to do. I rose early to start the fire so as to have the house warm when all were ready to rise.

Later as the oldest son, I was entrusted with many errands and chores. The hardest was feeding the horses and cows during the winter. I had to loosen the hay from the haystack, not an easy thing to do. I drew water from the well to water the horses and cows. Because of the severe winters and cold, I contracted rheumatism which totally paralyzed me. After all our home remedies had failed to cure me, my father took me to the sulphur springs in Jemez. After I bathed in the sulphur waters, I somehow felt cured. We traveled by covered wagon back home.

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My father saddled a horse for me to ride home following the covered wagons. We followed the Jemez Mountains along the Valle Grande stream. We stopped for lunch and did some fishing. The return home was full of joy and fun. I stayed at the farm until I entered the Christian Brothers Juniorate.

Formation: 1919 - 1923

Young Joe entered the Christian Brothers Juniorate in Las Vegas, New Mexico in 1919. He took life as a Junior Novice in stride, and has left the following account:

I entered Sacred Heart Training College of the De La Salle Brothers in Las Vegas, New Mexico in 1919. The time and the life were so simple. We rose at the sound of the bell - joyous and happy that God had given us another day to sing His praises, and to do His will. This I think we did with alacrity. We did not question our daily routine of prayer, classwork, play or whatsoever. I counted it a joy to live and let live all in God's service. We obeyed our superiors blindly, never questioning. 'Why this and why that?' We grew in age and grace before God and those who knew us. This selfless life led me to one thing: All for Him.

At Sacred Heart Training College we were educated for about ten dollars a month. This included board, schooling and living in the Brothers' House. There I learned the chores of house-keeping; we also became adept in the sciences; religion occupied first place; art was much in vogue. At 5:30 a.m. the bell sounded, calling us

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to sing God's praises. Ten minutes of exhortation or guidance was given. Holy Mass and Holy Communion, prayer of thanksgiving followed, after that we studied Catechism. Breakfast and clean up work came next. The rest of the day we followed a regular academic schedule. Throughout the schedule we played. Baseball, croquet, basketball were the games we were engaged in. Since were some forty young man living together in the same house it was easy to find an opponent or opponents. Most of the time great peace reigned. Outings and picnics were planned throughout the school year.

Feast days were celebrated with great pomp and fanfare since the spiritual side was emphasized. In all of these activities one goal was in my mind that one day I would be a full-fledged Christian Brother in the service of God and of saving souls.

Novitiate and Scholasticate: 1923 - 1925

It was on March 17, 1920, that Jose¹ received the Religious Habit of the Christian Brothers and was given the name Brother August Joseph.

He wrote:

There are three stages of formation: Juniorate, Novitiate, and Scholasticate. I spent four years in the Juniorate until I reached sixteen years. I then entered the Novitiate where I spent fifteen months in spiritual formation, learning the Rule and the way of life as lived by the Brothers. After my stay in the Novitiate I began my secular education in the Scholasticate in preparation for my teaching career as a Christian Brother.

Teaching: 1925 - 1974

Brother Joseph was first assigned to Saint Michael's in Santa Fe in 1925. He conducted his classes with great enthusiasm; earning the esteem and love of his students. This same year he was involved in a big event that would remain rather vividly with him for years to come. At four o'clock on a winter morning in 1926, the dormitory of the junior and senior boarders section where Brother Joseph was sleeping caught on fire and was almost totally destroyed. Brother Joseph often recalled the heroism of the Brothers who rushed to the rescue of all the sleeping boarders.

From Saint Michael's Brother Joseph was transferred to Cathedral High in Lafayette in 1932. Subsequently, he taught at St. Nicholas School in Bernalillo, New Mexico. His apostolate there was a most successful one that he always held as a most happy memory. In all, Brother Joseph taught in 11 schools in the New Orleans-Santa Fe Province. His longest assignment was at Catholic High in New Iberia, LA from 1959 - 1974.

Brother Joseph distinguished himself throughout the years as a very efficient teacher for the young and very young. His methods were based on drilling the students on essentials until these became second nature to them. Competitive games, organized in the classroom to encourage excellence, were always a strong point in Brother Joseph's method of forming young minds. Great interest and enthusiasm were generated automatically and his students soon realized that they were acquiring the power to learn. A Brother who witnessed his influence in the classroom wrote to Brother Joseph:

My first years of teaching were in Bernalillo where I was in Community with you. You gave me a wonderful start and it was here I appreciated your great way with kids and your teaching methods.

Retirement: 1974 - 1996

At the end of the 1975 school year, Brother Joseph was given a sabbatical. He traveled to the Holy Land. This trip left him with a deep lasting memory. He often mentioned how privileged he was to have visited places familiar to Jesus and our Blessed Mother. With a smile on his face, he recalled taking a good dunking in the Dead Sea.

In 1975 he was assigned to the Holy Family Community in Lafayette, Louisiana. Ten of his retirement years were spent at Magnolia, one at the College of Santa Fe Community and six at St. Michael's Community. Throughout these years he remained quite active by carrying on an extensive correspondence. Because he experienced good health, he was able to schedule trips to various places of interest around the world.

It was only in 1995 that he began to experience acute pain due to some unknown stomach problem. Following the advice of the community doctor, Brother Joseph underwent a thorough physical examination. He calmly took the news from his doctor and wrote the following to his loved ones:

Dear Relatives & Friends,

I usually give you good news. Today I must give you bad; I have cancer of the stomach. Friday I will go to the hospital. Pray for a poor sinner.

Before he was admitted to St. Vincent's Hospital, Brother Joseph disposed of all of his personal belongings and cleaned his room. At the hospital he told the surgeon:

Do a good job, because when I die and see God, I want to be cured."

After surgery, he gradually grew weaker. On the night before he died, Brother Joseph peacefully expressed his resignation to God's will. Early on the morning of July 22, 1996, with his Brother Director present, Brother Joseph peacefully breathed his last.

Following a wake and Mass of Christian Burial, Brother Joseph was laid to rest in Rosario Cemetery in Santa Fe, New Mexico.

May his soul rest in peace.

**Brother Samuel Martinez, FSC
Director of St. Michael's Community
Santa Fe, New Mexico**