



Society of Mary - Compañía de María - Société de Marie
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April 1st, 2026

Biography of Death Notice N. 3

The Province of the United States recommends to our fraternal prayers our dear brother **Leo Irving SLAY** of the Marianist Residence Community in San Antonio, Texas, USA, who died in the service of the Blessed Virgin Mary on March 20, 2026, in San Antonio at the age of 94 with 76 years of religious profession.

Brother Leo was a beloved cook and hospitality professional who drew on his family's decades of experience in the restaurant industry to bring a distinctive Marianist spirit to his life of service. Remembered for the welcoming presence he brought to every community in which he lived, Brother Leo also built a legacy of achievement in food service circles that led to him being named to several different Halls of Fame in the industry.

Leo Irving Slay was born on October 30, 1931, in St. Louis, Missouri. He was one of 10 children in the family of Joseph and Monetta (Elias) Slay.

Baptized as an infant, Leo attended grade school at St. Vincent de Paul in St. Louis before enrolling as a resident student at Chaminade College Preparatory for high school. It was there that Leo first encountered the Marianists, sparking in him – even as a freshman – a desire to pursue a religious vocation. (His brother Raymond served as a diocesan priest.) Upon graduating from Chaminade, Leo entered the postulate at Galesville, Wisconsin, in 1948 and then the novitiate there a year later. He professed first vows at Marynook in Galesville on August 15, 1949, and perpetual vows there on June 19, 1953.

Brother Leo's first assignment was in the kitchen at Marynook, serving as cook for the novitiate for the next two years. It was the start of a food service ministry that would last more than 60 years. From Marynook, Brother Leo was asked to serve in the kitchens and dining halls of several Marianist communities in the St. Louis area: Marycliff (Glencoe, 1952-54, 1960-62); Maryhurst (Kirkwood, 1954-60, 1962-69); Chaminade College Preparatory (Creve Coeur, 1969-88); and Vianney High School (Kirkwood, 1988-2011).

Throughout these years spent preparing meals for Marianist communities, Brother Leo also devoted himself to the training of chefs and the promotion of professional standards in the restaurant industry. He organized and directed the Marianist Culinary Institute in 1960 and was soon named to the boards of organizations such as the St. Louis Community College Hotel Restaurant Technology Department, and both the St. Louis and Missouri Restaurant Associations.

In addition, Brother Leo actively participated in a wide range of organizations, including the Institutional Food Editorial Council, the national, state, and local Food Service Associations, and the Chef de Cuisine Association of St. Louis. Along the way, he served terms as president of both the Food Service Executive Association and the St. Louis Restaurant Association. He also worked as a volunteer with Operation Food Search, supporting its mission to supply more than 200 food pantries in Missouri and Illinois.

One measure of his standing in the industry: The International Food Service Executive group asked Brother Leo to co-chair an effort focused on evaluating

food service operations for the US military. This work would send him to locations around the globe on six occasions over a 20-year period to conduct inspections of Army, Navy, and Air Force food service departments.

Brother Leo's spirit of service led to wide-ranging recognition in the industry. He received awards such as St. Louis Food Service Executive of the Year (1970), the Missouri Restaurant Association Professional Operator's Award (1972), and induction into the Hall of Fame of the Missouri Restaurant Food Service Association. He also became noted among the brothers living in community for enlivening their celebrations of civic and religious holidays with creative decorations, both in dining rooms and outdoors. "I believe that there is no better way to be happy than to be of service to others," Brother Leo wrote in marking his 50th jubilee.

Officially retiring from kitchen duties in 2011, Brother Leo lived for the next five years in Glencoe at Marycliff, before moving to the Marianist Residence Community in San Antonio in 2016. Those who lived in community with him through the years remember the spirit of joy and hospitality that Brother Leo brought to everyone.

Marianist Father Al McMenemy was especially fond of Brother Leo's faithfulness in managing the kitchen and preparing nutritious meals for the Curé of Ars community in Kirkwood, where Saturday breakfasts were always a treat. "The specialties were biscuits and fresh honey, or cornbread and applesauce," Father Al remembers with a smile. "Leo liked to be around people," he says. "When he was with a group, he liked 'to work the room,' meeting and greeting one and all! At times, he did this for much of the meal, rather than actually eating." In addition, Father Al notes, "Leo was a prayerful religious, and he tried to help others to be the same, attending to the small things around the community."

According to Marianist Brother Joe Markel, Brother Leo never forgot his roots. "Leo had a great love for his Maronite and Lebanese heritage," Brother Joe says. "A visit to St. Louis always included the Wednesday luncheon at St. Raymond Maronite Cathedral. He would call ahead, reserving at least two tables where he would join relatives, friends, and his former cafeteria employees and enjoy the traditional Lebanese kibbe, grape leaf rolls, tabouli, and baklava under a large

‘Welcome Home, Bro. Leo’ banner. Everyone knew and loved Brother Leo,” he says. Beyond these blood-family ties, Brother Leo was also a model of Marianist hospitality, notes Brother Joe. “Whenever visitors came, he was always the first to welcome them and make them feel at home,” he says.

Recalling the years they lived together at the Curé of Ars community, Marianist Father Tim Kenney learned to think of Brother Leo as “Brother Hospitality.”

“He had a real ministry of presence,” Father Tim says. “Brother Leo knew how to move around in a crowded room and greet people with his magnificent smile, shake their hand, and acknowledge them. He had a wonderful memory, too, and would make connections and resurrect stories in a beautiful way. He touched hearts and people. He wanted to share his Marianist family spirit, to make people feel special – like they really mattered,” notes Father Tim.

For good reason, he says, Brother Leo took pride in his many accomplishments and honors. “But as I look back on all of those plaques and recognitions from so many institutions, I think his greatness goes back to his service and to his simple spirituality,” Father Tim says. “He was proud to be a brother and a Marianist. I thank God, Mary, and Blessed Chaminade for the opportunity to know and love Brother Leo Slay.”

May he rest in peace.
