



Society of Mary - Compañía de María - Société de Marie
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October 13, 2026

Biography of Death Notice N. 15

The Province of the United States recommends to our fraternal prayers our dear brother **Paul Francis BREDESTEGE**, of St. Leonard Community, Centerville, OH, United States, who died in the service of the Blessed Virgin Mary on October 4, 2026, in Dayton, Ohio, USA, at the age of 88 with 69 years of religious profession.

Bro. Paul was a devoted educator, retreat director, mentor, and community leader whose life reflected a deep and joyful commitment to the Marianist mission of teaching, accompaniment, and community building. Over more than six decades of religious life, he brought creativity, warmth, linguistic skill, and an abiding love of people to high school classrooms in Ohio and Spain, to the retreat and renewal programs at Bergamo Retreat and Conference Center, to the halls of the University of Dayton, and to the beloved retreat community at Governor's Island. Those who knew him remembered an inspirational brother who was habitually joyful, deeply people-oriented, and always ready to say "yes."

Paul Francis Bredestege was born on August 22, 1938, in Cincinnati, Ohio. He was the second of three children in the family of John and Florence (Gates) Bredestege. His siblings included a brother, J. Thomas Bredestege and a sister, Mary Helen Delaney. The family made their home on Cincinnati's West Side, where Paul attended St. Teresa of Avila School. He would later reflect that he owed his "faith, basic values, and sense of family" to his parents' love and dedication — a foundation that remained with him throughout his decades of Marianist life.

Baptized on September 11, 1938, at St. Teresa of Avila Church, Paul was confirmed at the same parish on May 24, 1956. He completed his secondary education at St. Xavier High School in Cincinnati, graduating in 1956. It was in those final high school years that Paul began to discern a call to religious life. Though he had fully intended to enroll at Xavier University, a Jesuit spiritual director recognized that his interests and gifts — particularly his love of teaching and of working with young people — pointed not to the Jesuit priesthood but to "that little outfit" at rival Purcell High School: the Marianists. A phone call one Friday afternoon in January 1956 put Paul in contact with Bro. Henry Streb, S.M. (1916–1974), "whose mild manner and nurturing patience," Paul would later write, "changed the direction of my life."

The decision to join the Society of Mary surprised even Paul himself. "To the surprise of my family and even to myself, I dove in," he recalled years later with characteristic good humor. "What the heck, they'll probably send me packing from the novitiate by Christmas anyway." They did not send him Paul entered the novitiate at Marcy, New York, in August 1956, and professed his first vows on September 5, 1957. He then proceeded to the scholasticate at Mount St. John in Dayton, Ohio, earning his Bachelor of Arts in Spanish from the University of Dayton in 1960. He professed his perpetual vows on August 15, 1961, at the University of Dayton.

Bro. Paul's first ministerial assignment took him to St. Joseph High School in Cleveland, Ohio, where he served from 1960 to 1964 as a teacher of Spanish and religion. During those years, he also served as moderator of both the school's sodality and newspaper. He was also instrumental in establishing the school's language laboratory and organizing area language teachers. He then began a new chapter by crossing the Atlantic, serving from 1964 to 1967 in Madrid, Spain — teaching English at Colegio Santa María del Pilar and, in his

final year there, also at the Colegio Mayor Chaminade. During his time in Madrid, he helped to coordinate and initiate a language school and trained personnel in the management of the language laboratory.

In 1967, Bro. Paul returned to Chaminade High School in Dayton as a teacher of Spanish. In January 1968, he undertook a second novitiate experience in New Haven, Missouri — a five-month interprovince institute of the Society of Mary focused on the life and mission of the Church in the modern world — before returning once more to Chaminade High School as a teacher and subdirector of the community (1968–1969). In 1969, he was sent to the University of Madrid through the Middlebury College program to pursue graduate studies, earning his Master of Arts in Hispanic Studies in 1970. He subsequently served at Chaminade High School in Dayton from 1970 to 1974 as a teacher of Spanish, head of the Language Department, and Director of Student Welfare — a role similar in many respects to that of Dean of Students. The school would merge to become what is now Chaminade Julianne Catholic High School during his time there. He later earned a Master of Science in Educational Counseling from the University of Dayton in 1984.

From 1974 to 1980, Bro. Paul served at the Bergamo Retreat and Conference Center in Dayton, Ohio, first as a staff member and director of religious programming, then as a member and director of the youth retreat team, administrator of Bergamo Hall, and member of the President's Council. He wrote the center's first employees' handbook, helped to found the Bergamo Adult Renewal Board, served on the founding board of Retreats International (1980–1982), and was active in the National Marriage Encounter of Dayton as a clergy team member and presenter. He continued as director of the Bergamo community through 1981, including a year of personal renewal and community leadership. He later described these years as ones of "challenges, support, creative outlets, and grace-filled moments."

Bro. Donald Smith, S.M., who worked alongside Bro. Paul at Bergamo and later co-founded the Governor's Island retreat community with him, recalled the spirit Bro. Paul brought to their work together: "Bro. Paul and I directed high school retreats at Bergamo. We were always thinking of new ways to keep the students participating and interested in our presentations, and active in the discussions."

In 1981, Bro. Paul joined the University of Dayton as a member of the campus ministry staff, working with student neighborhood programming and the campus

ministry team. In 1984, he transitioned to full-time teaching as a lecturer of Spanish — a role he would hold for nearly two decades. He also directed the Interdepartmental Summer Study Abroad Program (ISSAP) from 1985 to 1992, leading students on immersive language and cultural experiences in Europe and the Americas. He took an academic leave from January to June 1994 to study Spanish in San Pedro, Costa Rica, and continued teaching at UD until May 2002, when he retired from full-time instruction. During this period, he also published a glossary of terms, *¿Cómo se dice?*, for international translators of the Society of Mary (1991).

Sr. Angela Zukowski, M.H.S.H., a colleague at the University of Dayton who knew Bro. Paul, for more than 45 years, remembered both his intellectual curiosity and his quiet, welcoming presence on campus. During his years at UD, he volunteered to help translate the Institute for Pastoral Initiatives Catechetical Sacramental Persons with Disabilities Textbook Series into Spanish — a major undertaking that supported Hispanic youth with disabilities across the country for many years. Sr. Angela also recalled a simpler but equally characteristic image of him: "I frequently remember finding him sitting on the bench outside of Alumni Hall feeding squirrels and other creatures in the early morning or afternoon. This gave us an opportunity to discuss what was evolving in our spiritual lives and what was important to us that day. He had an interesting, welcoming presence."

Retirement from the classroom did not mean retirement from ministry. Beginning in 2003, Bro. Paul served as director and later manager of the Governor's Island Marianist Community in Huntsville, Ohio — a retreat and vacation center he had helped to co-found in 1995 alongside Bro. Don Smith. The facility offered room, board, space, and recreational opportunities to a wide variety of Marianist-connected groups — religious and lay — for retreats, meetings, and other gatherings. He served as director of the community from 2003 to 2011 and as manager from 2011 to 2012. He then spent a period at the Marianist Residence in San Antonio, Texas (2014–2015), before moving to the Jackson/Lincoln community in Hollywood, Florida, where he served as director from 2016 to 2018.

In his final years, Bro. Paul made his home at St. Leonard Community in Centerville, Ohio. He remained characteristically engaged with the world around him — reading history and following world events, studying Scripture, writing essays and letters, and tending to the life of his community. Throughout his life, he also took deep pleasure in woodworking, oil painting, gardening, cooking, classical music, and travel.

Fr. Theodore Cassidy, S.M., who made his first vows alongside Bro. Paul at Marcy, New York, in 1957 and remained a brother Marianist throughout his life, offered this remembrance of a man he loved dearly: "I can tell you that I just loved Paul. One of the last times I saw him at St. Leonard's, he told me how happy he was. He shared how the nurses took such good care of him. He told me how he loved to sit and read history. When we would talk at lunch, he was always delightful. I made vows with him back in 1957. We made the novitiate in Marcy, New York, from August 1956 to our vows the following year. We studied together in the scholasticate. He went off to teach in Spain for many years, and I lost track of him. I joined the New York Province, and he stayed in the Cincinnati Province. He's one of those people whom you get to appreciate and love so much because he was comfortable in our Marianist life. He was just a gem of a person. He was a true Marianist."

Throughout his more than six decades of Marianist life, Bro. Paul was known for his felicity, his inspirational spirituality, his genuine love of people, and his willingness to accept whatever assignment the Society placed before him. He described his vocation simply and gratefully: "The people I have lived with, and those whom I taught and have ministered to in different ways, gave me more than I could have found elsewhere. These same people encouraged and counseled me as I made my way through a life that has been mostly very positive." On the occasion of his 60th jubilee of religious profession, he offered these words: "I owe my identity to God, family, friends, and by saying 'yes.'" And on the occasion of his 50th jubilee, he closed with characteristic simplicity: "God and his mother have been very good to me." May he rest in peace.
