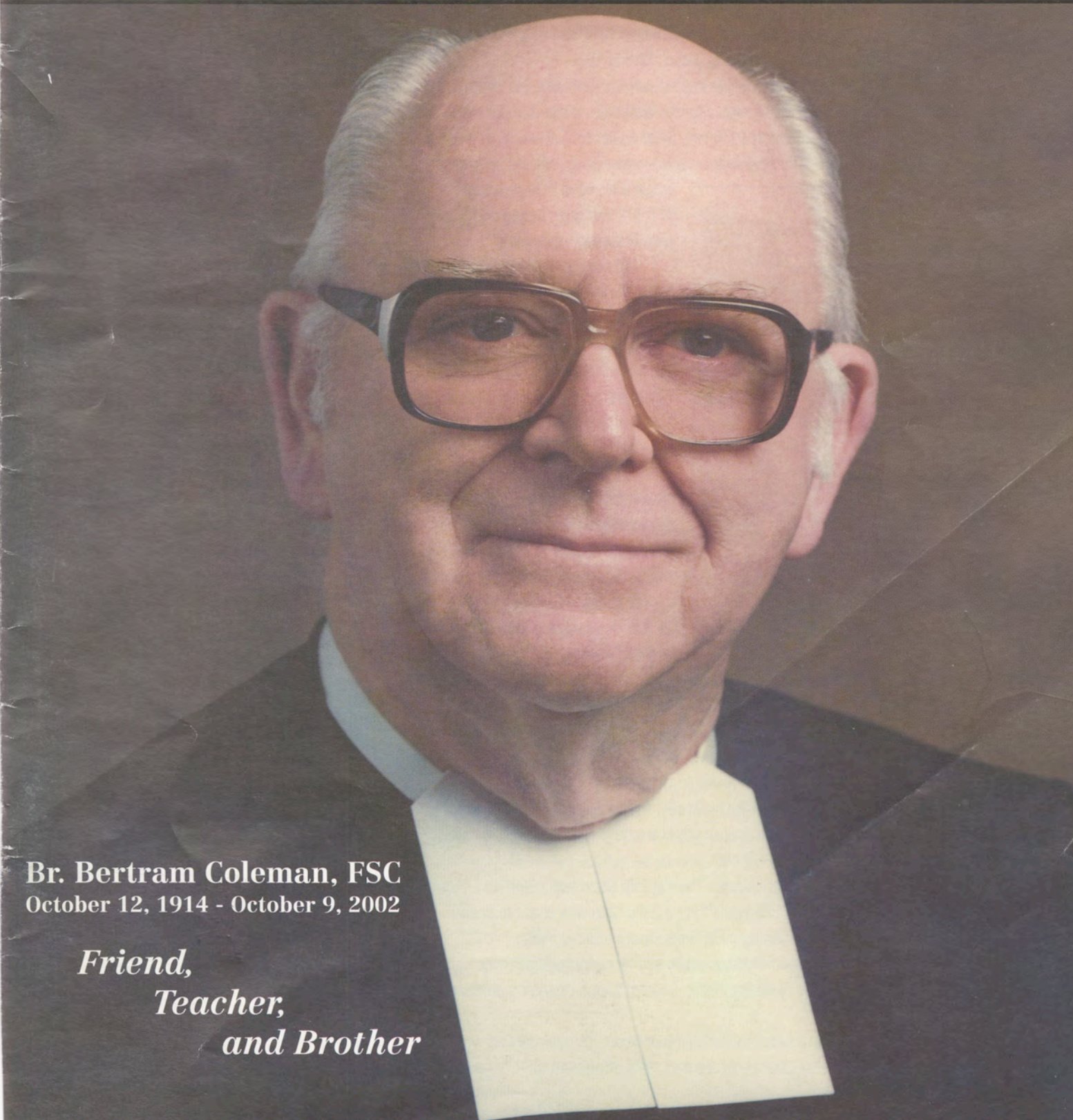


# CHRISTIAN BROTHERS CONNECTION



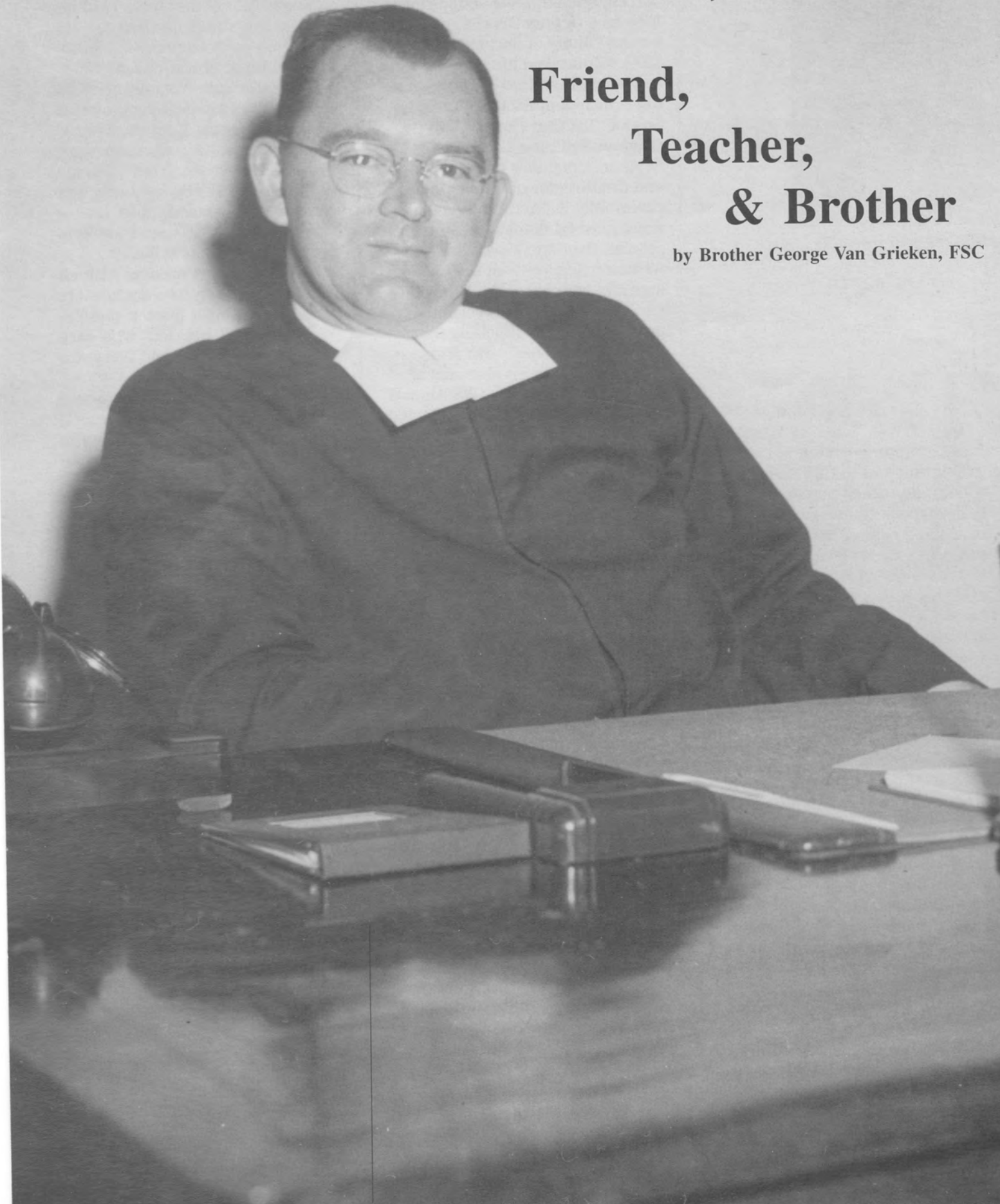
Br. Bertram Coleman, FSC  
October 12, 1914 - October 9, 2002

*Friend,  
Teacher,  
and Brother*

# Br. Bertram Coleman, FSC –

Friend,  
Teacher,  
& Brother

by Brother George Van Grieken, FSC





**B**r. Bertram Coleman, FSC was born as Raymond Coleman in San Francisco on October 12, 1914, the second of four children. His parents were both native San Franciscans. His father worked as a printer for the San Francisco News. His nephew, Mark Murphy, joined the Brothers also and is presently working in India, Sri Lanka, and Pakistan.

Raymond's first exposure to the Brothers was at St. Peter's Parochial grammar and high school in the Mission District of

San Francisco, where the Brothers taught the higher grades. Br. Bertram credits much of his vocation to his 8th & 9th grade teacher, Br. Ambrose, who was also the moderator of the Altar Society. Ray was president of his freshman high school class. At the beginning of his sophomore year in August of 1930, he entered the Junior Novitiate in Martinez. Ray participated in the move to the new property at Mont La Salle in Napa in April of 1932. As with the others at the Juniorate, he squeezed four years of high school into three years of study. After ending his two years at the

Juniorate as Student Body President, Raymond began his novitiate year with the reception of the robe in August of 1932.

Taking his first vows at the end of his novitiate year, Raymond – now called Br. Bertram – commenced his studies at Saint Mary's College where he was also the driver for the Provincial (who did not drive) and for Brother Z. Leo, a popular professor and lecturer in the Bay Area.

After two years of study at the college and eager to get involved in the apostolate, the 21-year-old Br. Bertram was assigned to Christian Brothers High School, Sacramento, in 1936 to teach in the 6th and 7th grades. While there, he and another Brother organized a parochial school league in athletics to provide competition and to generate interest in the high school. From 1937 to 1939, he taught at the Juniorate in Napa, returning in 1939 to his "first love" of Sacramento where he became a teacher, prefect, head football and basketball coach, and Athletic Director. At the same time he worked to organize a Guidance Department and oversee the YCS (Youth Christian Students) group on campus, organizing a national YCS convention at Saint Mary's College. In 1944 Br. Bertram was moved to Saint Mary's College where he was appointed Sub-Director of Scholastics. He took the opportunity to finish up his studies there while also coaching a group of college students in basketball – known as the "Moraga Wolves." Six months later he went to Saint Mary's College High School in Berkeley

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## Friend, Teacher & Brother

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as a teacher, only to return to the college at the end of the year when he was appointed the Director of Scholastics and introduced innovations such as washing machines and a community car.

After three years as Director of Scholastics, in 1948 Br. Bertram was appointed Director/Principal of Christian Brothers High School, Sacramento. For the next four-and-a-half years he developed lifelong close ties with the students, attending all sports, dances, picnics, and social activities, teaching religion to the seniors, and learning each student's first name. With the Sister principals of the other Catholic high schools in Sacramento, the Interschool Council was established for student officers to plan common activities in drama, publications, ski trips, picnics, Masses, and the like.

In 1952 Br. Bertram became Director/Principal of Cathedral High School in Los Angeles, where, in his own words, he "grew to love a people I never really knew before." The fine vocational arts program at Cathedral that he inherited came to be supplemented with a sophisticated business curriculum along with liberal arts courses for the college prep students. He also initiated the prestigious Circle C Service Club which is still in existence.

From 1958 to 1968, Brother Bertram worked as a teacher, a Vocation Director, a Community Director, and a Director of Education for the District of San Francisco, moving from Pasadena to Sacramento to Rheum Valley. As Director of Education, he began

the practice of organizing regular meetings among the Principals and Directors of the District's schools. In 1968, on the heels of Vatican II, he was the first Provincial (or "Visitor") of the District nominated and elected as the preferred appointment as Visitor by Br. Charles Henry, Superior General. "My attention as Visitor was to steer the District through the winds of change with some stability and sense of security...to develop within the District the feeling that what we were doing in schools with the young people was needed and necessary." For the next five years, Br. Bertram led the District, making the difficult decisions of closing some schools and withdrawing the Brothers from others, moving the District administration to more modest accommodations, and challenging the Brothers in their apostolic, communal, and spiritual endeavors.

When he left office as Visitor, Br. Bertram went to Justin-Siena High School in Napa to work as Dean of Boys and then as Vice-Principal with Sister Jeremy Carmody as Principal, a unique arrangement between the Brothers and the Dominican Sisters at that time. He continued to teach and became involved in the school's financial administration, including fund raising. In 1979 Br. Bertram was asked to return to Sacramento in order to take over the Development Office at Christian Brothers High School. Happy to renew old acquaintances and connect with alumni with whom he

had kept in contact over the years, Br. Bertram committed himself to development, attending conferences, seminars, and workshops while working with the Board of Regents, alumni and the many activities of an active development office.

After seven years in Sacramento, in 1986 Br. Bertram returned to Mont La Salle in Napa. "I really thought that I wanted to retire and have more time to read and pray. Brother Norman Cook, Visitor, said, 'Bertram, you are not going to retire!' He was right also." Brother Bertram continued to work as a Director, an administrator, and a member of the Novitiate staff, becoming District archivist in 1989. In that role, he developed sophisticated computerized resources, streamlined the processing of the District's historical resources, and facilitated regular communication through a liaison at each of the District schools. On July 1, 2002, at the age of 87, Brother Bertram officially retired. ♦

Brother Bertram Coleman, FSC  
(Raymond Joseph Coleman)

Born: 12 October 1914  
Received the Habit: 14 August 1932  
Final Vows: 24 July 1939  
Died: 9 October 2002

BA Saint Mary's College of California  
MA (Education) Immaculate Heart  
College, Los Angeles 1960

Visitor/Provincial of the District of San  
Francisco 1968-1974