

Rev. Dr. Paul John Achtemeier
September 3, 1927 - January 28, 2013
PAUL J. ACHEMEIER

Paul John Achtemeier, Herbert Worth and Annie H. Jackson Professor of Biblical Interpretation Emeritus of Union Theological Seminary in Richmond, Va., died in his home after a long illness on Monday, January 28, 2013. He was 85 years old.

Dr. Achtemeier ("Bud" to his friends) was born in 1927 in Lincoln, Neb. He was an honors graduate of Elmhurst College (A.B.) and of Union Theological Seminary in New York (B.D.), from which he also received his doctorate (Th.D.). He also studied at Princeton Theological Seminary, Heidelberg University (Germany) and the University of Basel (Switzerland). Before coming to Richmond to teach at Union Theological Seminary (now Union Presbyterian Seminary), Dr. Achtemeier also taught at Elmhurst College, the Graduate School of Ecumenical Studies of the World Council of Churches, Chateau de Bossey, Switzerland, and has been Visiting Professor of New Testament at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary and the Lutheran Theological Seminary, Gettysburg, Pa. He was the first Protestant elected President of the Catholic Biblical Association of America, and he served as Treasurer, Secretary and President of the Society of Biblical Literature.

Dr. Achtemeier was an internationally recognized scholar, having published 18 books and over 60 scholarly journal articles. In addition, he was editor of a number of book series, most notably the New Testament Editor for the series Interpretation: Biblical Commentaries for Teaching and Preaching and the General Editor of Harper's Bible Dictionary (the 1985 prize-winning edition) and later revised edition (1996), in conjunction with the Society of Biblical Literature. Additionally, Dr. Achtemeier has lectured and preached throughout North America and abroad at educational institutions, churches, scriptural institutes, and a wide variety of conferences for scholars, clergy and lay people, Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant.

Dr. Achtemeier was a beloved professor for generations of students, and a loyal colleague and friend to other professors at institutions where he taught. He was generous in sharing with the needy, and took very seriously the biblical mandate to care for the poor and homeless. Equally comfortable with those from all walks of life, he greeted with joy and openness all who crossed his path.

Dr. Achtemeier was preceded in death in 2002 by his first wife, Dr. Elizabeth Rice Achtemeier, to whom he was married for over 50 years. He is survived by his second wife, Dr. Sandra M. Levy; a son, Dr. P. Mark Achtemeier and his wife, Dr. Katherine Achtemeier, of Dubuque, Iowa; a daughter, Marie A. Finch and her husband, Paul Finch, of Norfolk, Va.; five grandchildren, Michael, Robert, Rachel, Sarah and Joshua; two stepsons and their families, and numerous nieces and nephews.

A memorial service was held at noon on Wednesday, February 6, at historic St. John's Episcopal Church, Richmond. The Central Chapel of Bennett Funeral Home is handling the arrangements.

(NOTE: Paul Achtemeier was a 1945 graduate of Monticello high school. His father, Rev. Arthur Achtemeier was pastor of Zwingli United Church of Christ in Monticello and Washington Reformation from 1938 to 1959. He and Clara, his wife, returned to Monticello after their retirement in 1971. Arthur and Clara are interred in Monticello's Highland cemetery.)