



# SPU Manila INTER-OFFICE BULLETIN

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## CENTENNIAL PLAY GALA NIGHT: 28 NOVEMBER 2008

The gala performance of **Our Children's Children**, the centennial play of St. Paul University Manila, will be on 28 November 2008. At the signal of Fr. James B. Reuter, S.J., playwright and director, the curtains will rise at 7:30 P.M. in the Fleur-de-lis Theatre.

Invited to this gala are the Superiors of St. Paul schools, Archbishops and Bishops, officials of the Commission on Higher Education (CHED), Catholic Educational Association of



the Philippines (CEAP), administrators from the member schools of the South Manila Inter-Institutional Consortium (SM-IIC), and other special guests from the Church and government sectors. The alumnae have also been invited to watch the play and honor Fr. Reuter. The response has been most encouraging. High School Class of 1963 has moved its Christmas party to 3:00 P.M. so they can go as a group to watch the play at 7:30. Members of High School 1965, College 1969 have organized themselves by groups (such as the Better Living-Sun Valley group) to attend the gala, even though some of them have already watched the play. Other classes, like HS 1954, HS 1962, HS 1964, HS 1966, have also signified their plans to attend the gala.

The real-life characters in the play—June Keithley, Monina and Gabe Mercado, Celeste Legaspi, and Sr. Eva Maamo, SPC—have been invited to come again as they did on opening night. Invitations were also sent to Mrs. Charo Santos-Concio, President of ABS-CBN and St. Paul AB-Communication Arts graduate, and Mrs. Celia Escarreal-Sandejas, Past President of the St. Paul Manila Alumni Foundation, Inc. (SPMAFI), under whose watch the Fr. James B. Reuter, S.J, Golf Classic was held. ABS-CBN and the Golf Classic are the major sponsors of the centennial play.

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The play has had considerable media mileage, including several pages in the *Philippine Daily Inquirer* and *The Manila Bulletin*, and plugging in ABS-CBN's A.S.A.P.

The latest write-ups were in *The Philippine Star*, one by alumna Peachy Vibal-Guioguo, the other by noted cultural columnist Rosalinda Orosa.

For those who missed reading these articles, we are reproducing them here:

## Fr. James Reuter: Life at its fullest

By Peachy Vibal-Guioguo Updated November 03, 2008 12:00 AM



At 92, Fr. James Reuter has still not lost his sense of humor and wit. In an intimate interview with a group of writers from different publications, Fr. Reuter, without batting an eyelash, says that at his age, he is still waiting for God's bigger plan for him. This is coming from a man whose lifespan encompasses the emergence of Philippine theater arts into the modern era. An American by birth but whose 70 years of living in our midst has made him into an epitome of the Filipino soul.

That plan would probably be about his latest theater venture: *Our Children's Children*, a play Fr. Reuter wrote and directed as homage to St. Paul University (formerly St. Paul Manila) which is celebrating its Centennial year in 2012. It is a biographical narrative of St. Paul Manila, from the first pre-school in 1912, through the pre-war years, WWII, EDSA I to the present time.

It had been 40 years since St. Paul Manila, known to be the "Broadway of Herran," has conducted a play at the Fleur de Lis auditorium. On Nov. 8 at 7 p.m., the door to the historical auditorium once again opens to the public as it mounts its first major drama production after a long hiatus.

An honorary alumnus, Fr. Reuter was an iconic figure at St. Paul Manila having spent more than half of his life with the school since entering its gates in 1952. It became an enduring love story between the young Jesuit priest and this historic educational institution. When not teaching, he was directing plays or giving retreats to generations of Paulinian students — who would become mothers and then their daughters and their granddaughters as well.

*Our Children's Children* is a play born out of Fr. Reuter's love for the school where he has played a crucial role in more than a half a century of dedicated and artistic service. For this play, he divulged that it took him a few days to finish the script. "When I write a play, I think of it from the first line to the last line and then I begin writing," Fr. Reuter said. "But I don't start writing the first scene until I know what the last scene would be," he added.

What makes this play more unique and intimate, in a sense, is that it has tapped only members of the Paulinian family (students, nuns, alumni, administrative staff, children of alumni, et al) to be part of the production. Wynna Medina, president of St. Paul University, reported that most of the cast "are nursing and education students who have to come back to the school from their OJTs

in order to rehearse." There are around 65 cast members who have to play 100 roles. "It's an all-school production but what makes it more special is the bond that we have created since we started rehearsing for this play," Medina enthused. "We have formed our own artistic community."

Apart from telling St. Paul Manila's story, one of the reasons why this play was conceptualized was to form the Fr. James B. Reuter Professorial Chair in Drama. "Fr. Reuter does not allow his name to be used loosely for fund-raising projects or whatever but he has agreed to this project," Medina disclosed. "It is our way of honoring Fr. Reuter who is a known multi-media personality and a living hero in the country's art and drama circles."



Some of the highlights of the play would be the depiction of the roles of two alumnae who figured prominently in the EDSA 1 revolution: June Keithley, who kept the hopes and the energy of the people alive by broadcasting the movements on EDSA on Radyo Bandido and Celeste Legaspi, who shed her celebrity status as she manned and cooked non-stop for the soldiers and broadcasters during those fateful days. They will watch the Nov. 8 premiere presentation and take a bow with the students who are essaying their roles.

In most of the scenes, the message is clear: the Sisters of St. Paul are driven in accomplishing their missions of teaching and nursing by only one thing alone: Love. Love for the children, love for the poor, love for the sick — coming from the love of Christ.

Our Children's Children will have the following playdates: Nov. 8, 7 p.m.; Nov. 9, 3 p.m.; Nov. 14 and Nov. 15, 7 p.m.; Nov. 28, 7:30 p.m., gala night. Tickets are at P100 for the matinees and P200 for evening performances. For details, call Fe at 536-1473 or Susan at 523-4259.

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## Our Children's Children



Philstar.com - **Saturday, November 22**

The above play, written and directed by Fr. James B. Reuter, SJ, was staged recently at the Fleur de Lis Theater to mark the centennial of St. Paul University Manila founded by the Sisters of St. Paul de Chartres.

The play's synopsis follows: It begins in 1911, with the early French Sisters, postulants and aspirants housed in the St. Paul Novitiate. Some neighborhood children make friends with them, and soon, their mothers are asking the Sisters to teach their children. The kind-hearted Sisters agree and

open a kindergarten, with six students, then add one class a year. Eleven years later, the school graduates three girls from its high school. All three become religious Sisters.



Some notable Sisters are presented in the history: Mother Bernard du Sacre Coeur, the Superior-Directress in the 1930's; Sr. Marie Paul who taught generations of kindergarten pupils before and after the war; Mother Anna and her encounter with the Catholic Japanese captain; Sr. Eva Maamo, the gentle doctor of the poor. The work of the nurses in the medical missions, particularly in the Culion leper colony, is dramatized.

The play talks about the post-war "cultural age" of St. Paul: the glee club with Sr. Marie Vincent, the Paulinian Players Guild and the Broadway musicals. It presents an excerpt from the first and perhaps the most remembered of these, *The Sound of Music*.

The roles of two alumnae in EDSA I show the indomitable spirit of the Paulinian, and of the Sisters of St. Paul: June Keithley, keeping people's hopes and energy alive by broadcasting the movements of EDSA over Radyo Bandido, at the risk of her life; the Sisters singing inspirational songs as they sit on the winding staircase to the broadcast room, ready to defend June and the Mercado brothers (Paolo and Gabe) with their own lives; and Celeste Legaspi, shedding her celebrity and cooking non-stop for soldiers and broadcasters.



In most scenes, the message is clear: the Sisters are moved in their missions by only one thing: LOVE. Love for the children, love for the poor, love for the sick, coming from the love of Christ. Caritas Christi Urget Nos. And the secret of success of St. Paul is prayer. The nuns pray to Christ, the first Teacher; to Mary, the teacher of the child Christ; to the Triune God, through their founder Pere Chauvet. In disappointments, trials and misgivings, they are strengthened by Chauvet, Mary and Jesus, to whom they pray and who urge them to continue caring for the children because they are "our children's children".

Assistant director-choreographer was Pamela Ortiz-Bondoc; the other assistant director, Sr. Sarah Manapol.



On Fr. Reuter: He came to this country as a young man and has lived here ever since. During WW II, he was interned in a prison camp in Los Baños for three years and three months.

He taught in high school and college in the Ateneo de Naga and Ateneo de Manila. He coached basketball and debate teams, organized the Ateneo Glee Club and directed plays.

He received the R. Magsaysay Award for Journalism, Literature, and Creative Communication Arts in 1989. During the Papal visit in 1981, Pope John Paul II himself gave him a special award for his outstanding service to the Church in mass media, for faithfully and courageously upholding truth, justice and integrity. In Jan. 1997, he was given the Pro Ecclesia Award, the highest Papal Award given to an individual, in recognition of his outstanding and exemplary service to Church and See.

In 1996, Senate and Congress unanimously voted him an Honorary Filipino Citizen. In St. Paul Manila, he has been directing plays since the '50s and '60s, the Broadway musicals earning for the school the name "Broadway of Herran".

Fr. Reuter's parish is the stage, the radio, the printing press, the shooting lot, the dressing room, the light box, the director's booth, the theater. His driving force has been - through the theater - to bring God to man and man to God.

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Indeed, the tremendous interest in the centennial play comes mainly from the fact that it was written and is being directed by Fr. James B. Reuter, S.J.

The alumnae have sent text and e-mail messages professing their great love and admiration for him. A few will illustrate the point.

From Ruby Lim-Tan Yu (HS 1963) : We decided to start our Christmas party at 3:00 P.M., take our merienda and proceed to St. Paul to give support ...for a full house for our dear Fr. Reuter.

From Malu Guidote-Vargas (HS 1978, B.S.-Psych. 1982), who is in Canada : I will surely support this Centennial Play and contribute to the foundation of Fr. Reuter. He was my retreat master for 8 years (high school and college) and he was also the director of the first play when I was in kindergarten where I had several parts---The Night Before Christmas and the Toy Story. Sister Sarah Manapol and Mrs. Borromeo were my favorite kindergarten teachers then. I wonder how they are?

From Lea Bowie (HS 1962), who is in New York: That auditorium holds so many fond memories for me. As for Fr. Reuter, he was present in my life from my baptism in the Los Baños Interment Camp, to the first play I participated in that Fr. Reuter directed when I was in grade school in Maryknoll, to all the retreats and plays in SPCM. He was the one who officiated at my wedding there in 1965. So, he means much to me and I would give anything to celebrate with you all at this Centennial gala. If any of you remembers, maybe Monette or Magu, please tell Fr. Reuter I am thinking of him and you all at this special event in one of the places where I spent the best 4 years of my youth.

... Of course you would remember about Fr. Reuter and Los Banos-- he wrote one of the stories we read on our Lit class -"Nuns in Prison" and later as a project, I constructed a miniature internment camp in class. Anyway, Monette, it would make me so happy if you remember me to Fr. Reuter. He also was a good friend to my dad Hal and always said my mother was the consummate lady - beautiful and gracious. The play that I was in when I was 8 years old in Maryknoll had a cast of characters from all the Catholic schools--it was a re-enactment of the life of St. Francis Xavier Fr. Reuter directed it and we performed it at the Assumption theater. When you see him, remind him of that. The last time I saw him, he blessed a medal of Our Lady of Guadalupe medal I had.