

## Acclaimed priest remembered for a life of service

Multi-talented and awarded priest dies in Philippines



Fr James Reuter's mass media work brought a string of awards.

After some 70 years of service in the Philippines, American Jesuit priest James Reuter died at the age of 96 on Monday, following a stroke.

Filipino Catholic bishops described Reuter, who was known for his use of modern media, even musicals, plays and movies, to preach the gospel, as a "great communicator of the Good News of Jesus."

"We will surely miss Fr James Reuter. He will continue to direct plays and musicals in heaven," said Bishop Arturo Bastes of Sorsogon. He recalled Reuter as a "very pious and exemplary" priest who always wore his priestly habit.

The presidential palace said Reuter's love of the Philippines and Filipinos was legendary.

"We join the Society of Jesus in the Philippines, the generations of alumni of the Ateneo de Manila University, and men and women of media, arts, and letters, who mourn the loss of this man of faith, good cheer, and eloquence," President Benito Aquino said in a statement.

The statement described the late priest as a "friend, mentor, confessor, and adviser to generations of Filipinos, both in public and private life, and in the media, arts and journalism."

Reuter, who served as the director of the National Office on Mass Media, helped organize UNDA/ASIA, the region's international Catholic association for radio and television.

He was also one of the founders of the Philippine Federation of Catholic Broadcasters, a union of 41 Catholic radio stations nationwide.

In 1981, the late Pope John Paul II honored Reuter for his "outstanding service to the Catholic Church

in the field of mass media.”

He later received the Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice award, the highest papal award given to any individual, in recognition of his outstanding and "exemplary service to the Catholic Church and the Holy See."

In 1989, Reuter received the Ramon Magsaysay Award for Journalism, Literature and Creative Communication Arts, an award considered to be Asia's counterpart of the Nobel Prize.

In an interview with Church-run Radio Veritas, Reuter once described Filipinos as "the most loveable people on the whole face of the earth.

"I cannot think of a place that is more attractive to live in than the Philippines," he said. "I never considered staying in the [United States]. I have never considered giving up my vocation here in the Philippines because I think it is beautiful. It is what God wants and it brings me personal joy and gratification."

Reuter came to the Philippines in 1938 as a 22-year-old Jesuit scholastic. He taught at the old Ateneo de Manila until World War II when he was arrested and interned at the Ateneo and later in the prison camp in Los Baños town..

He later went to the US to finish his theological studies at Georgetown University and was ordained at Woodstock, Maryland in 1946. He spent another year at Fordham University in New York studying radio and television. He returned to the Philippines in 1948.

In 1984, he was made an honorary Filipino citizen by the Philippine Congress in recognition of his lifetime service to the Filipino people.

Sister Sarah Manapol, a member of the Sisters of St Paul of Chartres and a close friend of Reuter, said the day before he died he joined the nuns in prayer and singing.

"We thought he was unconscious.... We became teary-eyed because we never expected he would respond that way," Manapol said.

"I was telling him when he was going: Thank you for loving the Philippines," she said.

Reuter died at the Our Lady of Peace Hospital, an institution he built to serve the poor, in Parañaque City

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