

OBITUARY

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**In Memoriam:
Francisco Radaza Demetrio, 1920–1996**

A man who loves his fellow men, loves his art.

Hippocrates, *Precepts* (adapted)

IGNACIO DE LOYOLA, founder of the Society of Jesus, wrote that the type of person desired by the Society was a person of compassion. Francis Xavier, one of the first members of the Jesuit order and one of its greatest missionaries, wrote from India asking for Jesuits who knew how to deal with others in a kindly fashion.

Father Francis Radaza Demetrio was such a person. He was not only an eminent scholar but a man kind to all who approached him for scholarly and other reasons. He helped as he could those who came to him with problems and those who sought his aid. He was particularly helpful to young people with various talents for museum work. Fr. Demetrio was also one who loved his own people. Salutatorian for the first graduating class of the Catholic High School for boys in Cagayan de Oro in 1938, he was always happy in later life to return to the city to devote his considerable talents to projects for the region and for his alma mater.

Fr. Demetrio entered the Society of Jesus in 1938. After completing his novitiate and collegiate studies (the latter in various places, and with considerable danger and delay because of the war), he received his baccalaureate in 1945–46. Father had a beautiful tenor voice, and during the war when he and his companions were not huddled under a strong roof to avoid the Japanese bombing he taught music and singing to his young fellow Jesuits. His first teaching position was at the Ateneo de Manila, which was then rising from the ashes of a devastated Manila.

Fr. Demetrio departed for theological studies in 1948 and was ordained priest in June, 1951, at Woodstock College, Maryland. He obtained an M.A. in the classics from Fordham University in New York City, where he became interested in folklore during his study of Vergil's *Georgics*. Returning to the Philippines in 1955, he taught Latin and Greek to the young Jesuit seminarians at Novaliches. In 1959 Fr. Demetrio was assigned to the Ateneo de

Manila as director of the Ateneo's Division of the Classics; he also served as moderator of the school's publication, the *Guidon*.

Increasingly convinced of the importance of folklore in the cultural life of the people, Fr. Demetrio obtained a Ford Foundation grant and began doctoral studies in June 1962 at the University of California at Los Angeles under the direction of Dr. Wayland Hand, a well-known authority in this field. After completing his doctorate in folklore, the classics, and comparative religion and publishing his dissertation ("The *Georgics* of Vergil in the Light of Modern Advances in Comparative Religion"), he returned in 1967 to the Philippines and to the Ateneo de Cagayan (which had meantime become Xavier University).

Fr. Demetrio explored the folklore of his native Philippines throughout his academic career. The list of his publications testifies to the scale of his efforts. In order to preserve the old traditions and promote understanding for the ways of the past he founded the Folklife and Folklore Research Center, Museum and Archives, within the Department of Philippine Studies at Xavier University. He belonged to a number of learned societies: the Philippine Folklife Society, the Philippine Sociological Society, the National Research Council of the Philippines for the Humanities, the Asian Folklore Studies Society, and the International Commission on Museums. He was chairman for Mindanao of the National Commission for Culture and Arts, and president since 1989 of the Mindanao Association of Museums.

Fr. Demetrio was a widely recognized scholar, traveling extensively in the course of his teaching and research. In 1967, at the Seventh International Congress of the Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences (Tokyo and Osaka), he presented a paper entitled "Engkanto Belief." In 1970 he attended the Twenty-ninth Congress of Orientalists in Canberra. In 1973 he attended a seminar on folklore at Indiana University and the Ninth International Congress of the Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences in Chicago, where he read a paper on Philippine shamanism. He then visited folklore institutes in Ireland, Holland, Finland, Sweden, and Switzerland to study their methods of archiving and documentation. In November of the same year he attended a UNESCO seminar in Kuching, Sarawak, on oral traditions, reporting there on the activities and methods of the Xavier Folklife and Folklore Center. In August 1974 he attended the Seminar-Workshop on Folk Arts for Education and Communication held in Bucharest, Romania. In the fall semester of the academic year 1979–80 he was visiting professor at the International Christian University in Mitaka, Japan. In 1980, with a Ford Foundation grant, he visited museums and research centers in Southeast Asia. In 1992 he was invited to lecture on

Philippine traditions in culture and religion at the Institut National des Langues et Civilizations Orientales in Paris. During his stay there he lectured on the *Guman*, a Subanon epic, and on the "One-Sided Man." He then proceeded to Bavaria, where he lectured on the Museo de Oro at Nuremberg, and to Passau, where he gave a talk entitled "Values in Philippine Folk Beliefs and Customs." In May 1994 he went to Beijing, where he lectured on Philippine culture and folklore.

Fr. Demetrio found recognition in many areas, academic and public, something reflected in the many distinctions and prizes he received. As noted above, he was a Ford Foundation Fellow at UCLA from 1962 to 1964. This was followed in 1964–66 by a position as a UCLA University Fellow. He was National Catholic Press Awardee for *Myths and Symbols, Philippines* in 1979. In 1981 he received the National Catholic Press Award for Comics for his two-volume *Illustrated Folktales*, and in 1986 the Outstanding Faculty Award of Xavier University at its forty-seventh annual commencement. In 1989 he was given the Outstanding Senior Citizen Award for Culture and the Arts by the Kagayhaan Oro Jaycees, and in 1990 the Gawad Para Sining (Pananaliksik Pangkultura) by the Cultural Center of the Philippines. This was followed in 1992 by the Achievement Award of the National Research Council of the Philippines, the National Book Award for the best book in the folklore category (*Encyclopedia of Philippine Folk Beliefs and Customs*) from the Manila Critics Circle, and, finally, the Premio Pitre Salomone-Marino from the Centro Internazionale di Etnostoria in Palermo, Italy.

In 1993 Fr. Demetrio received the Life Achievement Award from the Cagayan de Oro City Council. The Philippine Jaycee Senate chose him in 1994 as one of the Ten Outstanding Filipinos for 1993. Posthumously he will receive the 1996 William F. Masterson Award for eminent social contributions to the people and area of North Mindanao.

We, his associates and friends, must say a reluctant "ultimo adios" to Father Frank, as he was always called, and hope that the valuable work he did in folklore and museology will be carried on by his Philippine Folklife and Museo de Oro associates.

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