

Defender of the Spanish language in the Philippines

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As a promoter of the preservation of the Spanish language in the Philippines, Father Centina supported the work of Hispanics to “spread, defend and exalt” the Spanish language in that country. It is in this noble struggle that he got his inspiration to write bilingual Spanish–English poetry books. For more than three centuries – it should be remembered – the Philippine Islands formed a treasured part of the Spanish Empire.

His great body of work ensures him a solid place in Filipino literature in English and Spanish, as well as in Catholic poetry. Critics have described his work as a conscience that attacks and spares no one except the weak. It is full of intrinsic ideas about humanity and its connection to the Invisible. Her work explores the relationship between man and his Creator, between space and time, and between the earthly and heavenly continuums of life, along with our overwhelming shared sense of love, courage, and hope. Her poetry books include “Plus ultra y otros poemas / Plus Ultra and Other Poems” (2020), “Madre España and Illustrated Poems” (2019).

He graduated cum laude in each of the degrees he obtained from the University of Santo Tomás between the 1960s and the mid–1970s: Bachelor of Arts, Philosophy and Sacred Theology. In 1969, he won major English poetry and fiction awards at the Rector’s annual literary awards.

After a period in Peru, he became assistant pastor of the Church of San José in the city of Iloilo. He renovated this center when he was appointed assistant parish vicar and treasurer of this church. He taught literature at the University of the Philippines–Visayas (Iloilo campus) and at the Pius XII Institute for Catechetical and Social Studies of the Archdiocese of Jaro while serving as chaplain to Apostolatus Maris.

In Spain, he served in the Augustinian houses in Neguri and in the Andrés de Urdaneta College in Loiu, Greater Bilbao, from April 2013 to July 2019. He was last assigned at the College of Our Mother of Good Advice in León. The last seven years of his life saw an explosion of frenetic creativity that resulted in the publication of six poetry books, and one novel. He rediscovered his Spanish roots in Spain, where he began producing bilingual poetry collections and found a receptive and expanding audience.

Two weeks before his death, he completed his final and still unpublished work, “Recovecos / Crevices”, his third collection of bilingual poetry, consisting of 350 poems in Spanish and English. In his preface to this book, which turned out to be a foreboding, if ironic, omen of his own mortality, he wrote: “The new coronavirus has rewritten the rules of daily life, and even our most sophisticated technologies seem powerless to stop it as we descend into a dystopian world where no one is sure how all this will end, “he added,” this collection of poetry is my gift to those who survived the pandemic and my tribute to those who fought well and died. ”

Gilbert Luis R. Centina III was born on May 19, 1947 in La Carlota (Philippines) and died of the coronavirus on May 1, 2020 in León (Spain). He was a Philippine–American Catholic missionary from the Colegio de Nuestra Madre del Buen Consejo in León and the Andrés Urdaneta College in Loiu, Vizcaya. He was a well–known and award–winning poet and author. .

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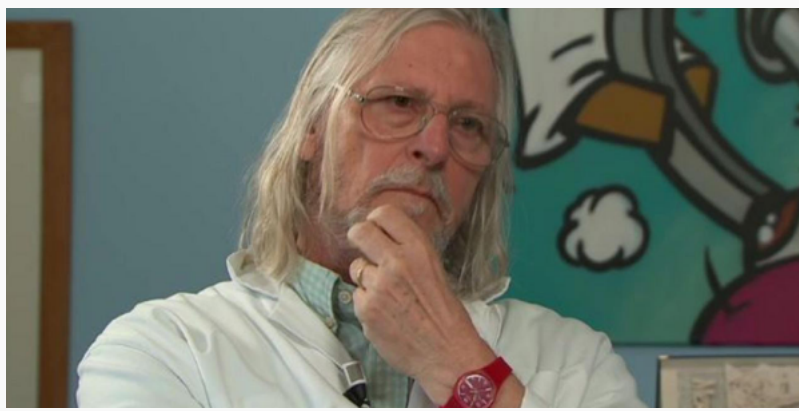
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