SONS OF SAN JOSE: THE JOSEFINO SPIRIT—A PROFILE
By Manuel G. Gabriel and James H. Kroeger, M.M.
Quezon City, Philippines: San Jose Seminary Alumni Association
Reviewed by Thomas H. Green

In August of 2001, San Jose Seminary celebrated its 400th anniversary of foundation (1601-2001). As a quadricentennial project, the San Jose Seminary Alumni Association in November 2000 commissioned the Josefino Spirit Project. Manual G. Gabriel, who with Mr. Ramon Salazar served as Quadricentennial Celebration co-chairmen, became the Project Author; James H. Kroeger was requested by the Alumni Association to serve as General Editor. They felt that a major priority and interest of the project was to determine precisely what this Josefino Spirit really is.

The heart of Sons of San Jose (Parts Two to Four) is the fruit of this multidisciplinary study, undertaken by a research team. Part Two is a general survey of alumni; Part Three reports the interactive sharing among alumni in various regions of the Philippines; Part Four consists of "personal narratives" by twenty-two alumni (ordained and lay) as well as four friends of San Jose. These three central sections are preceded by a fascinating and characteristically eloquent survey by Miguel A. Bernad, S.J., of the dramatic evolution of the present San Jose Seminary, since its inception in 1601 as a residence for boarding students at the Jesuit Colegio de Manila.

The heart of the book, the survey, makes clear, as many interviewees note, that it is difficult to capture in words, or concisely, what precisely this Josefino Spirit is. But a general consensus emerges that it includes three essential elements: solid academic training (now the province of the Loyola School of Theology); a strong Ignatian spirituality, producing men of prayer and discernment; and, a real "bonding," a sense of community which remains strong beyond graduation and ordination.

Despite the difficulties and lacunae (which the survey also gives
due attention to), my own thirty-three years at San Jose Seminary confirm the central importance of these three essential elements of the true Josefino Spirit which I have come to know and love. The same three elements are also affirmed and explored in more detail in the concluding section (Part Five) of the book, which includes seven “Thematic Reflections” and brings the discussion up to date. Certain new aspects appear, like the de facto mission of San Jose Seminary today to form formators for the many regional seminaries in the Philippines. However, the three essential elements of the Josefino Spirit clearly remain alive and relevant as the Philippine Church, in its infancy in 1601, comes to maturity today.

*Sons of San Jose,* the fruit of much hard work and solid reflection, is obviously of greatest interest to Josefino alumni in the third millennium. In addition, the book could serve as a model and inspiration for the alumni of other fine and venerable seminaries—like UST, San Carlos (Manila and Cebu)—and younger ones like Saint Francis Xavier Regional Major Seminary in Davao and Saint John Vianney Theological Seminary in Cagayan de Oro, to clarify their own distinctive spirit and charism by means of a similar study. Here too, Socrates’ classic dictum remains true: “An unexamined life is not worth living”!