It is not exaggeration or hyperbole to claim the work has "encyclopedia proportions."

The quality of this volume is further attested by the fact that LaRousse's original dissertation was selected by the Gregorian University's Research Center on Cultures and Religions to appear as Volume Four in its series: Interreligious and Intercultural Investigations. Various endorsements corroborate this positive assessment. Bishop Romulo G. Valles of Kidapawan Diocese in Mindanao notes that this book "is a must read for all those who desire and work for peace here in Mindanao. It is indeed an excellent help to the interreligious dialogue that we are doing here."

In the mind of Archbishop Fernando R. Capalla of Davao, Chairman of the Philippine Bishops' Commission in Interreligious Dialogue: "The book is a must for bishops, major superiors, seminary and religious formaters, missiologists, historians, peace-builders, and media practitioners." Without doubt, LaRousse has rendered invaluable service to the local Church in her mission of dialogue. This volume will certainly be a major point of reference for years to come; it is missiological scholarship at its best.

STRATEGIES FOR PREACHING PAUL
By Frank J. Matera
Collegeville, MI: The Liturgical Press
Reviewed by William M. Abbott

With so many New Testament writings attributed to Paul, it is hardly surprising to find these works liberally spread throughout the three cycles of the Sunday Lectionary. Unfortunately, they often appear in bits and pieces devoid of any link with their original contexts. This, coupled with the very challenge of digesting Pauline theology and the further effort required to render it accessible to modern parish congregations, leads many a preacher to bypass the epistles and to focus instead on the Lectionary's Gospel passages.
Matera’s book seeks to make the neglected second readings less forbidding to preachers. Though his work is probably more apt as a guide for consultation rather than as a study for cover to cover reading, it does accomplish a variety of tasks. First, the author assesses how the Lectionary organizes its use of the Pauline corpus in each of the three yearly cycles. He then goes through the Sundays of each cycle, grouping them by the way they feature a particular epistle, and providing concise but sound background data to illumine the historical contexts of the different epistles represented. The wider literary context of each letter follows, so that individual readings for particular Sundays can be seen within the larger meaning patterns from which they have been cut. While doing this, Matera gives helpful suggestions to advise preachers precisely when and which more extensive parts of the letters need to be read to fully appreciate particular Lectionary texts. Finally, he proffers theological themes that are rooted in and appropriate for the contexts of the texts being read.

This book is helpful in its being able to condense the fruits of Pauline study into relatively brief yet understandable descriptions of the various epistles that were chosen for the Lectionary. The positions Matera presents are reliable and balanced reflections of mainstream scholarship. He performs a valuable service in emphasizing how important the need is to appreciate the contexts, both historical and literary, if preachers are to do justice to what Scripture readings mean to proclaim. Because of this, the author is able to keep preachers focused on key themes that emerge from the texts’ primary message. His approach helps those interpreting God’s word to avoid the all too common practice of launching sermons on topics quite peripheral to the readings, emanating rather from speakers’ imaginations and preferences than from the Sacred text itself.

On the negative side, Matera’s suggested themes might perhaps lean a little too much towards the abstract and general. Preachers will still have their work cut out for them incarnating topics like the “ecclesial dimension” of love, belonging to “the community of the new covenant,” and “devotion to the Lord.” Some pithy examples would have provided welcome leads on how to develop such themes for actual parish congregations.
The author also might have been more consistent when handling Deutero-Pauline writings. Certain epistles in the Lectionary might have been considered Paul’s writings in the early tradition of the Church, but today are questionably part of the Pauline corpus. Matera clearly acknowledges that “Paul did not write the Epistle to the Hebrews” (96). He then correctly refers to Hebrews or the author of Hebrews rather than Paul when describing the epistle’s contents: “Hebrews (rather than Paul) argues” or “Hebrews introduces,” etc. This approach might easily have been adopted, too, for Ephesians, Colossians, 1-2 Timothy, and perhaps 2 Thessalonians. It would make preachers more aware of the diverse provenance of “Pauline” writings, without undermining Matera’s helpful elucidation of their background and contents.

Such drawbacks, however, are minor. Matera’s book remains overall a convenient and helpful vademecum, empowering preachers and correctly orienting them to tap the many riches that lie within the Sunday Lectionary’s second readings.

THE COLUMBANS IN THE PHILIPPINES, 1929-1950: VOL. 1
Compiled and written by Martin Noone
Edited by Niall O’Brien, with the assistance of
Mary Grenough, Paul Richardson
Manila: Missionary Society of St. Columban
Reviewed by John N. Schumacher

The somewhat complicated authorship above reflects the fact that Father Martin Noone, the book’s principal author, died in February 1998, and it was left to others to try to make known the fruits of his research. It is understandable then that this book is not a fully integrated and complete history of the Columbans, for Noone had not yet finished processing his research, but it is nonetheless a valuable contribution to the historiography of the twentieth century Philippine church, so far consisting chiefly of accounts of the various