



NEWS ARCHIVE:

Roman Catholic Diocese of Saskatoon

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St Thomas More College production will be Fr. Heidt's final show

Man for all Seasons runs at STM Jan. 15-17; Jan 22-24

By Kiply Lukan Yaworski

A Newman Players 2010 presentation of A Man For All Seasons will mark the final Saskatoon performance by Rev. Ed Heidt, CSB, a longtime English teacher at St. Thomas More College on the University of Saskatchewan campus, who has directed and performed in many local theatrical productions over the past 17 years.

He will play the Spanish ambassador Signor Chapuys in the January production of Robert Bolt's drama about Sir Thomas More's conflict with King Henry VIII – one last Newman Players involvement before Heidt retires from his teaching position and moves to New Mexico this spring. Heidt has taught English at the Catholic college since 1992, and is presently teaching "Reading Drama," "Reading Culture," and "Autobiography Studies."



Left to right: Rev. Ed Heidt (the Spanish Ambassador), Daniel Tallion (Sir Thomas More), and Art Battiste (Cardinal Wolsey) will appear in A Man For All Seasons Jan. 15-17 and Jan. 22-24 at St. Thomas More College in Saskatoon. It's the final Newman Players production for Heidt, who has taught English at the Catholic college since 1992.

A Man For All Seasons is a great play to end with, says Heidt, reflecting on themes that resonate in his own life, and which he will also explore with students when teaching the play during his last term at STM.

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“In *A Man For All Seasons*, Thomas More wants his silence respected, and he struggles to keep his integrity. He wants to remain silent – and that’s a hard place to be. It is not easy to be silent when an answer is demanded of you,” says Heidt.

The latest Newman Players production also features STM alumnus and parishioner Art Battiste playing Cardinal Wolsey. Battiste had Heidt’s role of the Spanish ambassador in the original STM production of *A Man For All Seasons* some 45 years ago. “That was in the 1960s: we did the play here while it was still on Broadway,” recalls Battiste.

Heidt and Battiste auditioned for each other’s parts before being cast as Chapuys and Wolsey by director Adam Day in a production otherwise dominated by students.

“That Art and I are involved is great, but it should be about the students,” stresses Heidt, noting that the title role is played by student Daniel Tallion. “He is a wonderful More. He has a look and a voice and a manner that just captures the integrity of Thomas More.”

Director Adam Day says a sense of community is what he most appreciates about Newman Players. “Everyone throws out ideas, we work together,” Day describes. “We have a masterful group of very good actors in this production. And I really appreciate all that Ed and Art have brought to this – their background, skills and life experience.”

Over the years, Battiste and Heidt have worked together in several productions, including *The Hangman*, a play about a priest visiting a man on death row, and *Lear’s Shadow*, a condensed version of Shakespeare’s play presented at a Newman Player’s one act festival in March 2008.

Later that summer, Heidt took a revised version of *Lear’s Shadow* to the Hamilton Fringe Festival in Ontario, working with another friend, John Cieslinski. Over the past several years, Heidt has also presented other summertime Fringe shows across the country, including a trio of Shakespeare-related productions: *Shakespeare’s Teacher*, *Shakespeare’s Fools*, and *Shakespeare’s Women*; and a one-man show which he wrote about the Trappist monk Thomas Merton, entitled *Holding a Mirror to the Mountain*. Heidt’s community theatre work in Saskatoon has included Gateway productions such as *Morning’s at Seven*, and an Off Broadway Dinner Theatre production of *The Sunshine Boys*.

Heidt’s Newman Players involvement at STM over the past 17 years has included directing a double-bill of *Who’s Afraid of Virginia Wolfe* and of *No Exit* performed in repertoire in 1993; *Our Town*, the first production to be staged in the new Fr. O’Donnell Auditorium; *Only Once*, an original musical that begins in a hospital nursery and ends in a retirement home; and a popular production of *Jesus Christ Superstar* staged at Broadway Theatre in 2003. Heidt has also played roles in many STM productions, such as *Doc*, *As You Like It*; and *Journey with Jonah*; as well as in a memorable student-directed production of *Murder in the Cathedral* staged at the Chapel of St. Chad on campus.

This long-standing involvement in theatre is connected both to his

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teaching and his spirituality, says Heidt. Staging a production is an exercise in collaboration, and is about walking alongside others to call forth something from everyone involved, including the director, the actors and the audience, he explains, noting a connection to the spirituality of the Congregation of St. Basil that he first encountered as a boy at school.

“I am a Basilian Father, and was raised in that tradition since I was 13,” says Heidt. “Their whole example to me was working with others in an integrated way – not above and separate. That’s why I was drawn to them. It was never about being above their students. They grew with the students, in a very supportive way.”

There is a kind of ministry that happens in a tangential way in the active work of teaching or collaborating on a theatrical production, he adds, recalling times when the opportunity and the need to offer encouragement, support and affirmation to an individual transcends everything else.

For Heidt, the ideal to strive for – whether in teaching, directing or in ministry – is to “disappear.” It was a longing expressed so often by the Trappist Monk Thomas Merton, notes Heidt, explaining that the goal is not to gain recognition for oneself but to call forth something from others.

“The Basilian Fathers were always part of the community, and not separate from it,” adds Battiste, who has a long connection with the Basilian community at St. Thomas More College.

Along with Rev. Ron Griffin, CSB, and College President Rev. George Smith, CSB, Heidt is one of the three remaining Basilian priests who presently serve at St. Thomas More College, as well as providing ministry to the St. Thomas More faith community. The Congregation of St. Basil has announced that it will end its direct involvement at St. Thomas More College within the next few years.