



Iracema Xavier dos Santos

Photo courtesy of the Brazilian White Center-UNASP.

Santos, Iracema Xavier dos (1934–2020)

THE BRAZILIAN WHITE CENTER – UNASP (2)

The Brazilian White Center – UNASP (2) is a team of teachers and students at the Brazilian Ellen G. White Research Center – UNASP at the Brazilian Adventist University, Campus Engenheiro, Coelho, SP. The team was supervised by Drs. Adolfo Semo Suárez, Renato Stencel, and Carlos Flávio Teixeira. The following are the team members: Melissa Querido Batista, Priscila Carvalho dos Santos, Allan Sleyter Soares de Atayde, Jonatan Ferreira Nascimento, and Leo Eduardo Menegusso Valenzi.

Iracema Xavier dos Santos distinguished herself as a professional in various Adventist schools, serving as a teacher, coordinator, and counselor in Brazil.¹

Early Life and Education

Iracema Xavier dos Santos was born on February 18, 1934, in Sorocaba, São Paulo, Brazil. In her childhood, when Iracema and her brother, future pastor Osvaldo Ferraz, were 7 and 2 years old respectively, her father

gathered the family and said to his wife, who had recently converted to Adventism: “Take good care of these children,” referring to Iracema and her brother. “Never leave this church; this is the true church. Many churches will appear, but beware, because this one is the true one.” A few days later, he passed away.²

Her mother, now a widow with two young children, began working hard as a nurse at the Santa Casa Hospital in Sorocaba to provide them with a good education. When Iracema turned 13, there were no longer any schools that allowed her to be absent on Saturdays. With great effort, her mother sent her to study at the current Brazil Adventist University in São Paulo, at a time when only older girls usually attended the boarding school. There, she completed Teacher Training and later graduated in Pedagogy from the Pontifical Catholic University of Paraná.³ It was also at the Brazil Adventist College that Iracema decided to become a Seventh-day Adventist, being baptized in a lake near the school.⁴

Marriage and Teaching Ministry

Iracema married Pastor Floriano Xavier dos Santos (1928-2017)⁵ on July 1, 1954.⁶ When they met, she was only 17 years old and a teacher at Brazil Adventist College while he was studying Theology.⁷ Together, they had four children: Tânia, Telma, Júnia, and Marcelo.⁸ Upon completing his Theology degree, her husband received a call to serve as an assistant pastor in Porto Alegre’s Central Church in Rio Grande do Sul. From then on, a journey began in which, in some cities, Iracema was able to find work, in others, she was not. Even so, she always persisted in accompanying her husband in the ministry.⁹

In 1959, the couple moved to Santo Ângelo, Rio Grande do Sul, where Floriano received his first district.¹⁰ There, she had one of her most remarkable experiences, volunteering at an Adventist school that lacked financial resources to hire a teacher. She took advantage of every opportunity to develop her missionary spirit, through which she witnessed and was used in powerful conversion stories. Among them, the story of one of her Sabbath School students, Eliana, stands out. Her mother was an Adventist, but her father was not. He was a strict military man and had problems with the Adventist Church because of the Sabbath. Due to the influence of her mother and Iracema, the girl decided to ask for her father as a birthday present to sit down on Saturdays and listen to the stories Eliana learned in Sabbath School, which happened for a total of three years. After this period, the girl decided to get baptized and, through conversation, convinced her father to join her. Both remained in the church.¹¹

In 1961, her family moved to Santa Maria, Rio Grande do Sul, where they stayed for a year until they were called to the Parana Adventist Academy. After a long and tiring eight-day trip they discovered that the occupant of the house they were going to live in had not yet vacated the premises. This meant they had to stay in the lady’s dormitory for another week. In the meantime, the Conference’s president at the time, Pastor Arnaldo Rulist, proposed that Floriano take over the Londrina District, which eventually came to fruition. During the year the Xavier family was there, churches like the one in Vila Brasil were founded.¹²

Iracema and her family moved to Curitiba the following year, as Floriano had been elected departmental director of Education and Youth for the Parana Conference, where he served for ten years.¹³ On July 1st and 2nd, 1967, the first MV Youth Congress was held in Paraná. Iracema, who at the time was an educational advisor for the Conference, was one of the coordinators, responsible for the youth's presentation.¹⁴ In 1969, Iracema and Floriano started a Christian Vacation School in partnership with Pastor Osvaldo Ferraz and his wife. Iracema led the project, bringing together approximately 80 children that year.¹⁵ The couple also participated in a cultural trip by the Education Department of the Paraná Conference to the Northeast of the country in 1971.¹⁶

In 1972, her husband was called to São Paulo, at the time the headquarters of the [South Brazil Union Conference](#), where they stayed for only a year and a half, before moving to Rio Grande do Sul. The family would return to São Paulo in 1976.¹⁷ Between September 29th and October 4th, 1978, Iracema represented the East São Paulo Conference at the Education Department Meeting in Campo Grande, Mato Grosso.¹⁸ The following year, she co-wrote, with Ana Garcia, a booklet for Children's Week of Prayer that contained activities and guidelines for those responsible for the event. Another version would be written by the pair in 1986.¹⁹

The family moved to Niterói, Rio de Janeiro in 1980.²⁰ Two years later, she and her husband participated in the First Adventist State Congress on Education, which took place at the Central Church in Rio de Janeiro. There, they presented the work being done with the Christian Vacation Schools.²¹

Later Years

The couple moved to Brasília in 1986, where they resided until her husband's retirement. The couple spent their final years in Engenheiro Coelho, São Paulo.²²

Iracema had great appreciation for the verse in Psalm 28:7. The hymn *Canção da Vida* (*Song of Life*) also deeply marked her spiritual journey, especially during a period of illness when she had to undergo surgery at the São Paulo Hospital. At that time, she alternated between hospital stays and periods of recovery at the home of one of her daughters, who lived in the city of São Paulo. One day, struggling greatly to get out of bed and feeling deeply distressed about her situation, she prayed fervently, asking God for comfort. She wanted to read a Bible passage, but her Bible was out of reach, so, she turned to the hymnal that was beside her. When she opened it at random, she found *Canção da Vida*, which message brought her peace and spiritual renewal in that moment of fragility.²³

Iracema and Floriano celebrated 60 years of marriage in 2014.²⁴ Her husband would pass away a few years later, in 2017, at the age of 89.²⁵ In total, the couple had 43 years of ministry.²⁶ Iracema Xavier dos Santos passed away at the age of 85 on May 24, 2019, in the city of Campinas, São Paulo, due to acute respiratory failure and a carotid-cavernous fistula. Throughout her life, she distinguished herself as an educator in Adventist education, serving as a teacher, coordinator, and counselor. Widow of Pastor Floriano Xavier dos Santos, she left behind three children, seven grandchildren, and four great-grandchildren. Her legacy remains alive through her

testimony of faith, dedication, and missionary spirit, always committed to God's work and the Christian ministry.

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NOTES

1. "Dormiram no Senhor." *Revista Adventista*, 116, no. 1368 (April 2021): 46.

2. CNMA-Centro Nacional da Memória Adventista. "Iracema Xavier | Série: Pioneiros de Luz-2012 (Memória Adventista)." Vídeo; Tercio Sarli. *Minha Vida de Pastor II: Setenta Pastores Jubilados Falam de sua Vida e de seu Ministério*. 1st edition, Tatuí, SP: Casa Publicadora Brasileira, 2009, 556.

3. "Dormiram no Senhor." *Revista Adventista*, 116, no. 1368 (April 2021): 46.

4. CNMA-Centro Nacional da Memória Adventista. "Iracema Xavier | Série: Pioneiros de Luz-2012 (Memória Adventista)." Vídeo.

5. "Memória." *Revista Adventista*, 112, no. 1326 (October 2017): 35; CNMA-Centro Nacional da Memória Adventista. "Floriano Xavier | Série: Pioneiros de Luz - 2012 (Memória Adventista)." Vídeo.

6. Daniel Melão Zuntini. "Uma Pesquisa Sobre a Vida e Ministério do Pastor Floriano Xavier." *Monograph*, Instituto Adventista de Ensino-Campus 2, 1999, 12.

7. CNMA-Centro Nacional da Memória Adventista. "Testemunhos de Vida | Lagoa Bonita: Pr. Floriano Xavier." Vídeo.
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10. Ibid.
11. CNMA-Centro Nacional da Memória Adventista. "Iracema Xavier | Série: Pioneiros de Luz-2012 (Memória Adventista)." Vídeo.
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21. "Rumos da Educação." *Revista Adventista*, 77, no. 6 (June 1982): 19-20.
22. Daniel Melão Zuntini. "Uma Pesquisa Sobre a Vida e Ministério do Pastor Floriano Xavier." *Monograph*, Instituto Adventista de Ensino–Campus 2, 1999, 20.
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