

Acosta, Jesse Pescasio, Sr. (1926–2015)

MARY GRACE LADION-DE GUZMAN

Mary Grace Ladion-De Guzman taught at Lipa Adventist Academy for eleven years, the first established academy within the territory of South Central Luzon Conference. She is a licensed science teacher and holds a master's degree in Science Education. She is particularly interested in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) education and staff development. Her husband, Marlon De Guzman, is a senior auditor for the South Central Luzon Conference. They have two children. Guzman is currently pursuing a Ph.D. in Education with a specialization in Curriculum and Instruction from the Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies.

Pastor Jesse P. Acosta, Sr. was a colporteur, minister/evangelist, and leader from the Philippines.

Early Years, Education and Marriage

Jesse P. Acosta, Sr. was born on December 24, 1926, to Higino Acosta and Felomina Pescasio in Bucal, Maragondon, Cavite, Philippines. Higino was a farmer, and Felomina was a housewife. His family had an active membership in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Jesse Acosta was baptized in 1938 in Bucal, Maragondon, by Pastor C. M. Cara.¹

He attended Bucal Church School for a year and then spent six years in elementary at Maragondon Elementary School. He went to Cavite High School for a year and then transferred to Western Cavite Institute where he finished his high-school education. He proceeded to Philippine Union College (PUC) and took a Bachelor of Arts in History and Philosophy and finished the degree on March 30, 1952. He also attended the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary of the Far East and earned a degree of Master of Public Health at PUC in April 1973.²

He married Carmen B. Vitangcol on April 8, 1951. Carmen was born and raised in Orion, Bataan. She was baptized in 1934 and became an elementary school teacher. Their union was blessed with six children—Jesse Jr., Jared, Joyce Mae, Jennen, Jane Marie, and Jonathan.³

Ministry

While still a student, he used to be a part-time teacher assistant from 1945 to 1948 and a house-help from July 1948 to March 1949 to support his schooling. Then, from 1949 to 1952, he joined the canvassing work and became a student colporteur under the Central Luzon Mission (CLM) scholarship program. While still a college sophomore, he lost his father on December 23, 1950, a day before his 24th birthday.⁴

He started his career in the denomination after his college graduation and served as an assistant publishing secretary in CLM from April 1952 to 1954.⁵ His active involvement in the literature ministry while still a student

prompted the mission to place him in such a position. Among his experiences in the literature ministry was the conversion of 10 people to Sabbath worship while he and Jose Leones sold *Judy Steps Out* to some people in Alfonso, Cavite.⁶ Moreover, he had also the opportunity to work with Elder Detamore and Elder Joseph Rey Bailey in various preaching activities of the territory.⁷

In 1954 he was called to serve CLM as the Publishing Department secretary⁸ until 1960. He was ordained as a gospel minister in 1958.⁹ After his term as a secretary of the Publishing Department, he was moved to the mission field of CLM as a district leader from 1960 to 1963.¹⁰ Then a call for presidency to lead the Southern Luzon Mission (SLM) in the Bicol region was answered by Acosta in January 1964. He became SLM's twelfth president.¹¹ He facilitated the gospel work in SLM until December 1965.¹²

Once again CLM called him to be the Publishing Department secretary from January 1966 to December 1967.¹³ In January 1968 he accepted the CLM ministerial secretary's office¹⁴ at the same time as a mission evangelist.¹⁵ Being an evangelist, he actively conducted Bible studies. One particular evening a man named Mr. Bueno was supposed to go to a night club; however, he was led to one of Acosta's Bible study series. Mr. Bueno continued to attend the nightly study with his wife and sister, and soon they were all baptized and welcomed to the Adventist Church. The tithing doctrine impressed Mrs. Bueno that resulted in her conversion.¹⁶ Acosta left the ministerial office in June 1973 and became a church pastor in Philippine Union College (PUC) until November of the same year.¹⁷

Then, he returned to CLM for pastoring jobs from November 1973 to December 1976. He was involved in "evangelistic campaigns in greater Manila,"¹⁸ Philippines. He was among the recognized graduates of the SDA Theological Seminary of the Far East in PUC who were urban preachers. "He was the first to really preach about righteousness by faith and was invited all around the North Philippine Union Mission (NPUM) territory."¹⁹

In January 1977 South-Central Luzon Mission (SCLM) called him to be the publishing chaplain and mission evangelist.²⁰ He stayed in SCLM as an evangelist until December 1979. Then he answered the call to serve the Manila Sanitarium and Hospital (MSH) as the hospital evangelist or chaplain on January 1, 1980. He stayed in MSH until March 31, 1985.²¹

Later Life and Contribution

After his retirement he traveled to Hong Kong-Macao Adventist Mission for some preaching engagements. Then he came home to the Philippines and went around the areas and churches that needed his service. He remained faithful to his duty as a minister until his death. Acosta died on October 15, 2015, at MSH.²²

Acosta actively served the denomination for 33 years. He made various contributions to the gospel work under NPUM. Aside from being a valiant minister and evangelist, he also topped among other literature ministers in NPUM during his time and received an award from Pastor Albert Santiago. He was also awarded as the best

chaplain for MSH due to his outreach ministry.²³

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NOTES

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5. *SDA Yearbook* (1954), 119.
6. George A. Huse, "Literature Wins Souls in the Philippines," *ARH*, May 9, 1957, 32.
7. Jesse Acosta, Jr., Jesse P. Acosta's son, interview by the author, via Messenger, March 24, 2021.
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9. *SDA Yearbook* (1959), 99.
10. "Service Record of Jesse P. Acosta, Sr."
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17. "Service Record of Jesse P. Acosta, Sr."
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23. *Ibid.*

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