

Delgado Alonso, Alejandro (1922–1993)

ESTHER DÍAZ

Esther Díaz Sablón, D. Min.-*honoris causa* (Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan) and M.A. (Montemorelos University, Nuevo Leon, México), retired as rector of the Cuba Adventist Theological Seminary. She worked for many years for the Adventist Church in positions such as university professor and chaplain, vice-rector and professor of the Adventist seminary in Cuba. She is married to Pastor Juan Guerrero and has two grown daughters.

Alejandro Delgado Alonso was president of the National Association of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Cuba.

Early Life

Alejandro Delgado Alonso was born in Ceiba Mocha, Matanzas, Cuba on April 22, 1926.¹ Alejandro and his twin sister Alejandra, who were known as Neno and Nena, were the youngest of a large family.²

Although his family was not Adventist, Alejandro accepted Christ in his youth and, in 1944, when he was 18 years old, he was baptized into the Adventist church in Cárdenas, Matanzas, Cuba, by Pr. Braulio Pérez Marcio, at the end of a series of conferences.³ For a long time he worked as a cabinetmaker, but later he dedicated himself to selling Christian books on health, family, and education.⁴

Matrimony

On October 21, 1953, at age 27, Alejandro married Hilda Cardero. Hilda's family were Adventist and lived in the country's capital. Her mother had founded the church in Víbora, La Habana.⁵ Alejandro loved his wife dearly and he often said: "What I am today, I owe to Hilda".⁶ Some time went by and, given the impossibility of having children, the couple adopted a four-year-old girl named Migdalia Viamontes. From the moment of her adoption, little Migdalia became the daughter they had wanted so much to have. Later Migdalia married and had two children, Michel and Aniel, who married and both of whom have two children each.

Alejandro was a charismatic and cheerful person, traits that helped him bond with young people with whom he came into contact. He enjoyed baseball, was fond of Mozart's music, and admired fine works of art. He demonstrated his love for art, painting "Jesus in the Sanctuary" which was displayed in his living room.⁷

Ministry and Service

Dedicating his life to the service of God, he began to study theology in 1955 at *Colegio de las Antillas*, located in Santa Clara, Cuba. Alejandro obtained his Associate in Arts degree on June 2, 1957.⁸

Pastor Alejandro Delgado began his ministerial work in the Western Conference in May 1957, and in August 1962, he was ordained to the gospel ministry as pastor. In August 1962, Pastor Delgado was called to be president of the Eastern Conference, a position he held until January 1966. During the following two years he served as a district pastor.

In January 1968, Pastor Delgado was appointed vice-president of the National Association of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Cuba, a responsibility he held until January 1974 when he became president of the Eastern Delegation. In 1978, he was elected president of the National Association of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Cuba, directing the Adventist work throughout the country.⁹

When he took up his new position, Pastor Delgado had to face one of the greatest crises of the Adventist Church in Cuba. The state department of social security had imposed a fine of \$342,500.00 Cuban pesos on the church, which they had to pay in 15 days, which was impossible for the church to do at that time.¹⁰ There was no justifiable reason for this fine, since church workers did not receive social security benefits, but if not paid, all churches in Cuba would be closed. The administration agreed that church workers would not receive their wages during that month; they would live on whatever assistance they would get from their church brothers and sisters.

The entire church wanted to cooperate. Children sold their toys and young people who were planning to get married gave their saved money and postponed their weddings. Many members sold part of their possessions and others who had saved money donated it to the church. An offering was also collected in which everyone contributed as much as they could. The result was that the fine was paid before the deadline. Glory to God! the churches remained opened for all who desired to worship.

Another crisis that Pastor Delgado faced during his presidency of the National Association occurred in 1980, when there was an exodus of thousands of Cubans to the United States of America. Approximately 100 church workers from throughout the country left, including the secretary, the treasurer, and departmental leaders of the National Association, as well as various field leaders and the director of the seminary.

Shortly afterwards, representatives of the state immigration department visited Pastor Delgado to ask him to also leave with his family. They informed him that probably after the exodus, all churches would be closed. Pastor Delgado went to the market and bought as much food as possible and locked himself in his house with his family in order to get away from public life and thus avoid being sent abroad.

The National Association now had few workers to care for the established churches and the seminary. To solve this situation, Pastor Delgado met with all remaining leaders and reorganized the work by appointing new administrators for the National Association and the conferences of the territory. A new director was appointed for the seminary, which at that time did not have its own building and operated on the ground floor of the National Association building in La Habana.

For entry to the seminary, young applicants had to be first approved by the board of directors of the seminary. They were then evaluated by the nation's Ministry of Justice before receiving authorization to begin their studies. There was a group already approved by the board, but not by the state. The administration determined that these young people be called to begin their studies in order to prepare new workers to care for the needs of the church. However, in October 1980, the Ministry of Justice ordered that all new students who had enrolled in courses for the new school year had to leave the seminary and return to their homes. It was not until 1982, when a group of 12 students were approved by the state authorities and were then able to return to the seminary. Despite this crisis for Adventism in Cuba, the churches continued to function and carried forward the proclamation of the message of salvation.¹¹

Retirement and Death

In 1984, Pastor Alejandro Delgado was sent to lead the church of Santiago de las Vegas in La Habana, where he remained until his retirement in 1989.¹² After some time, he became ill and died on June 28, 1993 in Santiago de las Vegas in La Habana. His wife emigrated to the United States and died in Orlando, Florida in January 2001.¹³

Legacy

Thanks to the power of God, generosity of the church, and tenacity of Pastor Alejandro Delgado, the Adventist Church in Cuba was able to emerge successfully from these two great crises. Pastor Delgado's faith and perseverance in defense of the church's organization left a legacy of loyalty to God, the church, and the organization that strengthened members to face the crises experienced. Pastor Alejandro Delgado longed for the second coming of Christ so much that he ended all his sermons with the words: "Maranatha! The Lord is coming soon."

SOURCES

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NOTES

1. Personal Service Records, Cuban Union Secretariat Archives, La Habana, Cuba.
2. Migdalia Viamontes, daughter, email to author, November 21, 2016.
3. Cárdenas Church Historical Account, unpublished document by Teresa González, retired Bible worker.
4. Migdalia Viamontes, email to author, November 21, 2016.
5. Maria Abreu, Children's Ministry Director Cuban Union, interview by author, November 14, 2016, La Habana, Cuba
6. Raquel Rodríguez and Julio Gómez, retired Bible worker and husband, interview by author September 16, 2016, La Habana, Cuba
7. Waldo Santos, president, Pinareña Mission and Teresa González, retired Bible worker, telephone interview by author, December 10, 2016.
8. Cuba Adventist Theological Seminary Academic Secretariat Archives, La Habana, Cuba.
9. Personal Service Records, Cuban Union Secretariat Archives, La Habana, Cuba.
10. Arturo Broche, "*Dios que no puede mentir, prometió*," unpublished document, 1991.
11. Aldo Joel Pérez, president of the Cuban Union, interview by author November 10, 2016. La Habana, Cuba.
12. Personal Service Records, Cuban Union Secretariat Archives, La Habana, Cuba.
13. Migdalia Viamontes, email to author, November 21, 2016.

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