

# Asoy, Leonardo Remulta (1959–2015)

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Leonardo Remulta Asoy was an Adventist pastor, youth leader, and Sabbath School leader, and a “dynamic promoter and supporter of evangelism.”<sup>1</sup>

## Early Life

Leonardo Remulta Asoy was born on November 18, 1959, in Tangub City, Philippines, to Carmelo and Gavina Remulta Asoy. Both parents were engaged in business.<sup>2</sup> Leonardo Asoy, fondly known as “Nardz” by his colleagues and as “LRA” by many church workers, was the second of eight siblings, seven boys and one girl. The eldest was Wilfredo. Leonardo’s birth was followed by Felix, Danicto, Carmelito, Segundino, Adelina, and Levi in that order.<sup>3</sup>

Leonardo Asoy grew up in the town of Dinas, Zamboanga del Sur. After a series of Bible studies, he was baptized in the Seventh-day Adventist faith on October 24, 1975,<sup>4</sup> in his home place, by Pastor Isidro B. Bello Sr.<sup>5</sup>

He finished his six-year elementary education in Dinas, Central School. He proceeded to finish his four years of High School in Dinas High School, Dinas, Zamboanga Sur.<sup>6</sup>

## Education and Marriage

After finishing high school, Asoy attended Mountain View College, Valencia City, Bukidnon, where he studied for a Bachelor of Arts in theology. He received meager financial support from his parents, so he worked his way through college. He stayed in the home of faculty members and tilled their gardens in exchange for board and lodging. Although a working student, he demonstrated his leadership skills especially in the ministerial department of the college. After spending six years in college, he earned a degree in Bachelor of Arts in theology with a minor in health in 1983.<sup>7</sup> In 1990, he earned a Master of Arts degree in pastoral studies at the Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies (IIAS), Silang, Cavite, Philippines in 1990.<sup>8</sup>

Asoy married Elma Vasquez Asoy of Dumingag, Zamboanga del Sur, on December 23, 1986. Born on November 29, 1961, Elma Asoy was a teacher by profession. She was her husband's most reliable partner during his ministry. The Asoys had two children, Elnardz Harvey, born October 14, 1987, became a medical doctor and Shawnette Fae, born April 4, 1989, became a registered nurse.

## Career and Ministry

Asoy's ministerial career advanced rapidly. He quickly and steadily rose from district pastoral work to department director, and eventually held administrative positions from the local mission to the union and division levels. Asoy started as a ministerial intern in the Western Mindanao Mission (now Western Mindanao Conference)<sup>9</sup> in Gango, Ozamis City from 1983 to 1985. He served as a district leader from 1986 to 1987 in the same mission.<sup>10</sup> After serving for another two years in the district, he was ordained in the ministry in 1987.<sup>11</sup> He continued serving the Western Mindanao Conference as a district pastor until 1989. At the beginning of 1990, he was appointed associate director of church ministries and director of Adventist Youth and the National Service Organization of the same conference.<sup>12</sup> From 1991 to 1992, Asoy served in the same positions in the South Philippine Union Mission (now South Philippine Union Conference, SPUC) based in Cagayan de Oro City,<sup>13</sup><sup>14</sup> He served the Church Growth Institute (CGI), the Adventist Youth (AY), and the National Service Organization (NSO) of the SPUC from 1993 to 1995. From 1996 until the end of 2002, he was the department director of the Sabbath School (SS) and Personal Ministries (PM).

While Asoy served as Adventist Youth Director, and later when he became Sabbath School Director of SPUC, he would organize congresses which were attended by thousands of people from all over Mindanao and other unions in the Philippines and abroad. He invited the Heritage Singers to conduct a concert during one of these congresses.<sup>15</sup> According to Linda Mei Koh, former director of the General Conference children's ministries department, Asoy "was a passionate about Sabbath School and the importance of strengthening the faith of our members through lively and interesting Sabbath Schools."<sup>16</sup>

While serving as the Sabbath School and personal ministries director of the SPUC, he was elected a delegate to the 57<sup>th</sup> General Conference meeting in 2000 in Toronto, Canada.<sup>17</sup> Asoy briefly served as president of Davao Mission from January to June 2003 before he was called back to the SPUC to serve in the Adventist Chaplaincy Ministries and Ministerial Association departments of the union from June 2003 to 2006.<sup>18</sup> In 2007, he was called to serve the Southern-Asia Pacific Division as the director for the Sabbath School and Personal Ministries department.<sup>19</sup> He served in this capacity until the end of 2010 when he was elected president of the SPUC.<sup>20</sup> It was with enthusiasm that Asoy returned to Mindanao to serve as president of the SPUC from 2011 to 2015. While serving as the president of the SPUC, during the General Conference session of July 2015 at San Antonio, Texas, he was elected to serve as president of the Southern-Asia Pacific Division (SSD).<sup>21</sup> He served as the president of the SSD from August 1, 2015, to January 12, 2016.

Asoy's service as administrator was cut short due to ill health. After battling an illness several months, he died on January 12, 2015, at the Adventist Medical Center in Manila. He was only 56 years old. His untimely death was caused by "complications due to myelodysplastic syndrome (MDS), a rare bone marrow disease in which the bone marrow is unable to produce adequate healthy blood cells."<sup>22</sup>

## Contribution and Legacy

Leonardo Remulta Asoy's dedication and commitment to the ministry cannot be questioned. In his responsibilities as a district pastor, department director in the local conference, a department director in the SPUC, president of the Davao mission, department director of Southern Asia Pacific Division, president of the SPUC, and president of the SSD, he manifested the same charisma and unwavering commitment to the work of God. His passion for evangelism was demonstrated by his numerous engagements all around the missions, unions, and the whole division.

Asoy was a role model and mentor to young pastors, especially in his charisma for evangelism. He was also known to be an excellent organizer of events such as youth and Sabbath School congresses. He was a fund raiser, soliciting funds for evangelism and other church projects. He was very concerned about the welfare of the pastors, their families, and their ministry. He was also known for his generosity. He always invited pastors, fellow workers, and church members to his home for fellowship meals.

He was a friendly leader with a magnetic personality. At the same time, he was a family man, remembered by his wife and children as loving and supportive, despite his heavy responsibilities. All these characteristics made Asoy well loved among church members and greatly mourned when he passed away in the prime of life.<sup>23</sup>

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### SOURCES

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## NOTES

1. Ted N. C. Wilson as quoted by Andrew McChesney, in “Southern Asia-Pacific Division President Succumbs to Rare Disease,” *Adventist Review* Online, January 12, 2016. Accessed April 1, 2020. <https://www.adventistreview.org/church-news/story3606-southern-asia-pacific-division-president-succumbs-to-rare-disease>.
2. See Personal Service Record of Leonardo R. Asoy, Southern Asia-Pacific Division (SSD) Archives.
3. Segundino Asoy, brother of the late Leonardo Asoy, interview by author, January 25, 2019, AIIAS, Lalaan I, Silang, Cavite Philippines.
4. It is possible that October 25, 1975, was the date of his baptism rather than the 24<sup>th</sup> because the 25<sup>th</sup> was a Sabbath.
5. See Service Record from South Philippine Union Conference and the Southern Asia Pacific Division, SSD Archives.
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid.
8. Andrew McChesney, in the Southern Asia-Pacific Division President Succumbs to Rare Disease.” *Adventist Review* Online, January 12, 2016. Accessed April 1, 2020. <https://www.adventistreview.org/church-news/story3606-southern-asia-pacific-division-president-succumbs-to-rare-disease>.
9. Personal Service Record.
10. Ibid.
11. Ibid.
12. Ibid.
13. “Western Mindanao Mission,” *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1992), 139.
14. Personal Service Record.
15. Personal knowledge of Remwil R. Tornalejo who personally experienced and witnessed Asoy's sincerity and passion for evangelism as he worked closely with Asoy in the South Philippine Union Conference and in the Davao Mission while Tornalejo taught and served at South

Philippine Adventist College.

16. See Andrew McChesney, Adventist Review Online, 4.
17. "Delegates," *ARH*, North American Division edition, June 30, 2000, 46.
18. "South Philippine Union Conference," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2005), 361-362; Personal Service Record.
19. "South Asia-Pacific Division," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2008), 357.
20. Personal Service Record.
21. See Gay Deles, "Adventist Church's Southern Asia-Pacific Region (SSD) Elects New President," Southern-Asia Pacific Division, n. d., accessed April 2, 2020, <http://adventist.asia/news/adventist-churchs-southern-asia-pacific-region-ssd-elects-new-president/>.
22. "Southern Asia-Pacific Division President, Pastor Leonardo Asoy, Succumbs to Rare Bone Marrow Disease," Southern Asia-Pacific Division, n. d., accessed February 5, 2019, <http://adventist.asia/news/pastor-leonard-asoy-southern-asia-pacific-division-president-succumbs-to-rare-bone-marrow-disease/>.
23. Personal knowledge of Remwil R. Tornalejo.

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