



# IRTC

INTERNATIONAL  
REFORMED  
THEOLOGICAL  
COLLEGE

SPECIAL EDITION

IN MEMORIAM

# JOSÉ JOÃO DE PAULA

*“Our hearts sank as we heard about the passing of our beloved José João. A man of God, an inspiration for my life and a great friend! The Kingdom of God was greatly blessed by his life! Before our illness with COVID, we exchanged emails and he always had loving words of encouragement. [...] with thanksgiving in our hearts for José João, a man greatly used by God in this generation.”*

Rev. Ronaldo Almeida Lidório  
(friend, missionary and colleague)

These words express the feelings of thousands of people who knew him personally or were simply blessed from afar by this dear pastor, professor and friend who was called into the presence of the Father.

Rev. José João de Paula was born of Presbyterian parents in the city of Coromandel, Minas Gerais, Brazil on October 29th, 1955. He married Suely Alves and they had four children: Josely, Felipe, Aline, and Jonatan, all of whom have their own families and have given them 9 grandchildren, all servants of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Among those who influenced his life and ministry are the pastors and missionaries Steven Sloop, Sanders Reed, Joseph Martin, Olson Pemberton, Frederick Dinckens, Paul Coblenz, as well as Wilson de Castro Ferreira, Brazilian.

He graduated in theology from the Southern Presbyterian Seminary, in Campinas, in 1981. In 1999, he received his master's degree in Theology, majoring in the New Testament, from Andrew Jumper Center for Postgraduate Studies. He was ordained by the Presbytery of Alto Paranaíba of the Presbyterian Church of

Brazil, January 1983. Since 1992, he belonged to the Presbytery of the Alterosas, centered in Belo Horizonte, MG, and also became its moderator.

He pastored several churches in Minas Gerais, where he proved his dedication to missionary ministry and led these churches to permanent commitment to this calling. Rev. Éder Machado, an IRTC Master of Divinity student, met him during his first years as a pastor, “I met Rev. José João de Paula after my family moved to the city of Patrocínio, towards the end of the 80's. He was my pastor during all of my teenage years. He always showed exemplary character, his love for his wife and children and his joy in shepherd-



*Rev. José João de Paula and his wife, Dona Suely*

ing the Church of our Lord. I remember well how he loved to tell jokes, even though not particularly good at it, while exhorting us to laugh anyway, just to be polite. He was always active in the life of the church, including the theatrical plays. He spoke from the pulpit about the delicacies served to him on his visits and publicly expressed his gratitude for the baked goods gifted to him. He had a great mind, but an unmatched humility.

He became a member of the Foreign Missions Board of the Presbyterian Church of Brazil, in 1998. When it became the Presbyterian Transcultural Missions Agency (2002), he continued on, even participating in the executive committee. In 2014, he became the pastoral support missionary for this agency, visiting workers in the field outside Brazil. The nature of these visits was that of fraternal pastoral support. Rev. Marcos Agripino C. de Mesquita, the executive director of the agency, said of him: He was an excellent professor who left a deep mark in the lives of hundreds, even thousands, of students along his journey. He was an esteemed loving pastor of innumerable sheep, whom he diligently shepherded in the Christian walk. The missionaries in the African and American continents, who were pastored by him for several years, although devastated, keep great memories of his impactful visits.”

José João published his first book in 2000: Pentecost. After that, came: Missions in Flames (2008), Power From Above (2011), and Children Before the Mirror (2013). When God called him, he was working on an analysis and commentary on the Acts of the Apostles, together with Rev. Ronald Lidório.

He was also a recognized teacher of the Word of God, lecturing to evangelists, pastors, and missionaries. As such, he taught at the Eduardo Lane Bible Institute, in Patricio, from 1983 to 1991 and in 2004 until his death; as well as at the “Rev. Denoel Nicodemos Eller” Presbyterian Theological Seminary, in Belo Horizonte from 1993 to 2013. At this same institution, he was also the coordinator of the Department of Exegetical Theology for practically all of those years. A former student of his and missionary to India, Rev. Marco Antônio Lopes, recalls: “I had the honor of being a student of Rev. José João at “Denoel Nicodemos Eller” Presbyterian Seminary, in Belo Horizonte. He was an excellent and devoted professor. He passed on to us not only academic knowledge but was also a great role model of a pious Christian lifestyle. He was a man of God, consecrated believer, tireless servant and diligent in his service to His Lord. He was intensely dedicated to the cause of missions. He inspired us all to pray and contribute to the progress of missions in the whole world. For the Agency’s Missionary Training Course, he lectured on Contemporary Theology and Missions. In 2013, he started teaching Methods of Exe-

getical Research at the IRTC and also became the Coordinator of the Exegetical Department in 2015.

Rev. Ulisses Horta Simões, president of the IRTC and personal friend says with longing in his heart, “I knew José João de Paula as a colleague in ministry, a colleague in teaching, a colleague in the presbytery and a companion in vision and endeavors. He was a Christian who very meaningfully expressed the significance of being a ‘servant of Christ’, modeling this in actions and speech. He was the type of Christian the Scriptures expect: down-to-earth, busy with his daily labor, always thinking about the work of the Lord, with his thoughts on heavenly things, while submitting his daily work to the hope of the life to come. For him, missions was a matter of priority, urgency, and dedication; a topic and activity that occupied him with contagious fervor. I often witnessed his minimalist, frugal lifestyle, willing to give of himself and his goods to invest in the work of the Kingdom. We shared greater and more challenging plans for the near future, but God had higher and more sublime plans for him! We already miss him!

Rev. José João left to be with the Lord, due to a massive heart attack, in the afternoon of the 7th of May, while in his home, in Patricio. He leaves behind a great legacy as a servant of Christ! He lived up to the Biblical epitaph, “Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on. Blessed indeed,” says the Spirit, “that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow them” (Revelation 14:13 ESV)!



*Rev. José João de Paula and Rev. Ulisses Horta Simões, in a service held on the mission field in the city of Barão de Cocais, Minas Gerais.*