



Republic of the Philippines
Supreme Court
Manila

THIRD DIVISION

NOTICE

Sirs/Mesdames:

*Please take notice that the Court, Third Division, issued a Resolution dated **September 2, 2015**, which reads as follows:*

“A.C. No. 7425 (*Elizabeth Dupaya v. Atty. Plaridel L. Villacete*.) – This case is an administrative complaint for disbarment against Atty. Plaridel L. Villacete, former Judge at the Tuguegarao Regional Trial Court (RTC), Branch 4.

The following are the antecedents of the case.

Complainant Elizabeth Dupaya claims that Villacete is married to one Irene B. Florendo. He is a former RTC Judge whose dismissal was ordered by the Court on October 7, 1994, in A.M. No. RTJ-93-961, for Grave Misconduct and Violation of the Canons of Judicial Conduct. She accuses Villacete of publicly and scandalously cohabiting with a certain Joan Manglapus, and siring two (2) children with her, while Manglapus still appears to be married to one Nestor Malillin since September 10, 1998. She also alleges that Villacete participated and abetted in the falsification of the birth certificates of said children. In these documents, Manglapus wrote her name as Joan M. Villacete, having been allegedly married to Villacete on May 14, 1984 in Alcala, Cagayan. Villacete also declared “businessman” as his occupation, although he was then an incumbent judge.

For his part, Villacete asserts that he was already punished for the acts complained of when he was removed as a judge. He also denies having an adulterous relationship with Manglapus and any participation in the completion of the supposedly falsified birth certificates.

On February 27, 2009, the Commission on Bar Discipline of the Integrated Bar of the Philippines (IBP) recommended the suspension of Villacete from the practice of law for six (6) months for lack of good moral character. On August 28, 2010, the IBP Board of Governors passed Resolution No. XIX-2010-455, adopting the report and recommendation of the Investigating Commissioner, thus:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "JW".

*RESOLVED to ADOPT and APPROVE, as it is hereby unanimously ADOPTED and APPROVED the Report and Recommendation of the Investigating Commissioner of the above-entitled case, herein made part of this Resolution as Annex "A"; and, finding the recommendation fully supported by the evidence on record and the applicable laws and rules, and considering Respondent's lack of good moral character, Atty. Plaridel L. Villacete is hereby **SUSPENDED** from the practice of law for six (6) months.*

Neither party filed a motion for reconsideration or a petition for review to question the Resolution of the IBP Board of Governors. On April 6, 2011, the Court noted said Resolution. It also required Villacete to inform it as to when he had started serving his suspension.

On August 15, 2011, the Court noted Villacete's Compliance, informing it that even prior to the filing of the administrative complaint against him, Villacete had ceased practicing law and has no more intention to resume in the future due to old age. Therefore, he is deemed to have already served his suspension from the practice of law for six (6) months from August 28, 2010 up to February 28, 2011.

The Court's Ruling

The Court upholds the findings and recommendation of the IBP.

The IBP found that there was no sufficient evidence to prove that Villacete and Manglapus have been scandalously maintaining an adulterous relationship. There is likewise no proof that Villacete caused the inclusion of false entries in the birth certificates of his children with Manglapus. Villacete, however, does admit having children with Manglapus when he is still married to Irene Florendo.

The Court has previously held that siring a child with a woman other than his wife is a conduct way below the standards of morality required of every lawyer. Indeed, Villacete has failed to keep in mind that the requirement of good moral character is not only a condition precedent for admission to the Philippine Bar, but is also a continuing requirement to maintain one's good standing in the legal profession. A member of the Bar and officer of the court is not only required to refrain from adulterous relationships or the keeping of mistresses, but must also behave himself as to avoid scandalizing the public by appearing that he is treating those moral standards with utmost disregard.¹

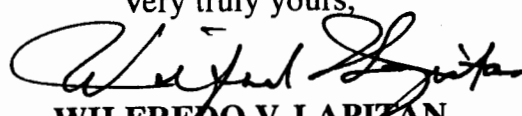
¹ *Tolentino v. Atty. Mendoza*, 483 Phil. 546, 559 (2004).

However, since Villacete had long ceased practicing law and has no more intention to resume in the future, he is deemed to have already served his suspension from the practice of law from the date of the IBP Resolution or on August 28, 2010 up to February 28, 2011.

WHEREFORE, the Court **AFFIRMS** the Integrated Bar of the Philippines Board of Governors Resolution No. XIX-2010-455 dated August 28, 2010. (*Reyes, J., on official leave; Perez, J., designated Acting Member, per Special Order No. 2112 dated July 16, 2015.*)

SO ORDERED.

Very truly yours,


WILFREDO V. LAPITAN
Division Clerk of Court
WV

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