



74 ❧ Two children and a wedding

A wedding was taking place at the church near the home of five-year-old Jean Clairick Junior Lutumba in Mbuji Mayi. The little boy and his older sister, Marie, asked their parents for permission to attend this important occasion with the other children of the neighborhood. The parents agreed. It happened to be the wedding of Benjamin Mubenga and Béatrice Ndaya.¹ The church was the Dibumba Plaine congregation of the Evangelical Mennonite Church (CEM).

Years later, Mubenga would become national president of the CEM, and Jean Clairick would become national president of the CEM youth.

After that first visit to the church, the two children regularly attended church together. Their mother developed the habit of cleaning them up and sending them off to church with a few coins. These habits became permanent.

Several weeks or months later, the congregation set out to construct a church building, and each member agreed to bring a contribution in money or in kind. The commitment was underway. Jean Junior and his sister were taken by this need. They brought the news home and succeeded in getting their parents' permission—notably their mother's—to take bits of gravel and sand that Papa had piled up to build a wall around their family's lot. Every Sunday the young believers came with their contribution. Everybody was pleased by this

photo—Jean Clairick Junior Lutumba

1 See “Benjamin Mubenga’s quest for peace and development” (chapter 73).

gesture from the two devoted children. The church leaders thought it necessary, however, to meet the parents.

The president of the women's group met Marie José, the children's mother, and brought her to Christ. Later, the spiritual path of Jean Junior and young Marie led progressively to the conversion of the whole family. Jean Junior was baptized in 2001, when he was sixteen. Just two years later he would become president of the congregation's youth, thanks to his intense involvement and his mastery of Anabaptist doctrine. For this, he recognizes the importance of a number of mentors in the church.

Jean Junior spread his wings as a youth leader—first in his congregation and then in the entire city of Mbuji Mayi. He created a theatrical troop to perform religious pieces such as “The Birth of Jesus” in theaters—with Junior often playing the role of Zechariah. He also worked to form choirs, collaborating with others who had more experience. His work was all for the purpose of leading young people to participate in the work of the Lord. He worked hard to unite and mobilize the youth of the ten congregations in Mbuji Mayi. One of his great contributions was a 2010 seminar to educate youth on HIV/AIDS.

His peers elected him national vice president of the CEM youth, and he became national president when his predecessor fell from grace. Throughout everything, his major concern has been that “the youth of CEM be well known throughout all the youth organizations and structures of our country as ardent workers for the Lord.”

Although torn between academic demands and the demands of discipleship, Jean Clairick always gives precedence to the latter. He has been known to skip exams in order to attend church meetings. It is no different when it comes to work missions outside the country, such as one to Burkina Faso that he joined in October 2011.

Active, courageous, and a natural debater, Jean Clairick Junior never misses an opportunity to express his point of view, and he never fails to attract the sympathy of others. “I put the Lord's work first,” he says, “because the Lord is the source of everything I do, even outside his ministry.”

Jean Félix Chimbalanga