



63 ❖ She saw CEM in a vision

Born in 1957 in Kolwezi, Jacqueline Kalenga Biayi (Jacquie, to her friends), came from a non-Christian family. She was married early to Musungayi Masanka, and from this union came six children, three of whom have passed away.

Jacqueline turned to God after the conversion of her husband, but before that she attended the Catholic church of Kolwezi, like all students attending Catholic schools. Not wanting to break an old habit, she attended Catholic worship in the morning and her husband's church in the evening. Jacqueline ended up belonging to a charismatic prayer group within her Catholic congregation.

After a relatively long period during which she attended neither her husband's church nor the prayer group, a vision appeared to her. In this vision Jacquie saw herself brought to a place where there was a church building. On the wall was inscribed the abbreviation "CEM." Asking a man at this place what the church building and the inscriptions on it meant, the man told her that this is the church where she should worship.

Encouraged by one of her friends, who believed that the vision indeed indicated the church where she should pray, Jacqueline had the conviction that the CEM—Evangelical Mennonite Church—was this church where she was called to serve God. As she never received any message contrary to this conviction, and as her home and many others were experiencing the torments of violence and ethnic intol-

erance, Jacqueline made every effort to believe that her church was CEM, even though she had never heard of such a church. When she was at the train station at Kolwezi, being forcibly expelled from her home, Jacqueline kept in her mind this amazing revelation that created in her the ardent desire to belong to CEM.

In 1993, six months after arriving at Mbuji Mayi, Jacqueline found herself in the market at Bakwa Dianga, where she sold second-hand clothes. Attracted by the hymns Jacquie was singing, a woman named Bisonsa Bimpe¹ approached her. When asked which church she belonged to, without hesitating Jacquie responded, “The CEM.” She was astonished to learn that her visitor was also a member of CEM. Bisonsa gave her a Christian embrace and invited her to come pray at the CEM Ditekemena congregation. Bisonsa took responsibility to send people to show her the way. Mama Mbuyi, sent by Bisonsa Bimpe, missed Jacqueline the first time she went to find her. Mama Ngalula found her and made possible her first visit. As the result of the efforts of these three women, in June 1994 Jacqueline walked across the threshold of the Ditekemena congregation.

Jacqueline Kalenga attended the congregation alone. Her husband was suspicious. He wanted to become a member of a more permissive church, as he hoped to marry several wives.

Having twice been baptized, first with the Catholics by sprinkling and then in the prayer group at Kolwezi by immersion, Jacqueline was excused from a third baptism at CEM Ditekemena and became a member in a ceremony of reception.

In 1995 she lost her oldest daughter. Because of this difficult trial, she missed coming to the congregation for two weeks. After Elder Kabeya Dibwe and the entire congregation came to console her, she once again took up the path to the congregation.

There was a major incident in the congregation the very day that Jacqueline began to come back. It was the arrest of Kabangu Kasonga, pastor of Ditekemena, following the partisan tendencies displayed by himself and Mpoyi Odate after the 1995 General Council. This imbroglio within CEM and at Ditekemena greatly mortified Jacqueline Kalenga, to the point that she exclaimed, her self-respect wounded, “Where will I go to find peace? Everywhere, there is no longer peace: at the house there are torments, and at the church, conflicts.”

1 See “Bisonsa Bimpe, sorcerer’s daughter” (chapter 62).

The Ditekemena congregation exploded because of that conflict. After the congregation reconvened and then dispersed again in 1999 because of a serious generational conflict, Jacqueline decided finally to join the CEM Ditalala congregation.

From then on, although she held no particular office, Jacqueline Kalenga did all she could to console and encourage the church women to rapidly put into practice the decisions of the women's committee for the district of East Mbuji Mayi. In 2001 the leaders of Ditalala made her president of women of the congregation.

A tireless intercessor, Jacqueline is always present at her congregation each time that prayer or other activities are planned. Besides, since 2005 Jacqueline Kalenga serves CEM as vice president for all CEM women. Her availability to serve God has resulted in her receiving God's help in turn. His assistance, protection, and salvation have been powerful aids in her struggle against the misfortune and sicknesses that attack her. Once attacked by a powerful cough that made her lose her voice, she prayed to God and received a vision in which a man told her, "Do not regret that you suffer from this cough and that you have lost your voice, for this sickness would have progressed into tuberculosis without your prayers. But remember, this will never happen, and from now on you will no longer suffer from this."

Jacqueline has, as a peacemaker, worked for the reconciliation of spouses both outside and within her congregation. Outside the congregation she sought peace between two couples renting in the same housing unit as her own family.

Jacqueline has a strongly developed sense of forgiveness. She believes any insult must be forgiven after it has been admitted. Her example is an important and rare Christian quality. "I have often been disparaged by women in CEM who showed their displeasure because I was elevated to the position of women's secretary. These women asked themselves, without embarrassment in my presence, where I was when they were suffering pain for CEM's stability." In the face of these statements, she replied, "If the Lord himself had not recommended to me to pray at CEM, I would have gone elsewhere." Once this response was given, Jacqueline states, "All was erased, and when we saw each other the next day, life goes on as if nothing had happened."

Jacqueline says, “God is counting on me to serve him. No matter where one comes from, when one’s star shines for the service of the Lord, it is good that the person truly puts herself at his service and that she is accepted by all.”

Jean Félix Chimbalanga