



## 83 ❖ A servant of God finds her gifts

**E**sther Misenga was born in 1987 in Mbuji Mayi, the oldest daughter in a family of seven children. She did her secondary studies in a pedagogical institute of the Evangelical Mennonite Church (CEM) but failed twice to pass the state exams at the end of her sixth year. That was the end of her studies, because her parents didn't have the means to allow her to repeat the year.

Did the fact that she was a member of two church choirs have something to do with her failure to pass the exam? Esther was baptized in 2001, at the age of fourteen, and the same year joined the Works of God choir. As if that wasn't enough, in 2003 she also became a member of the Sangilayi Bipemba congregation's choir, Chosabi. She never missed practices and services. One choir rehearsed every Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday at 4:00. The other met on Monday, Thursday, and Saturday at 5:00.

But Esther doesn't link her double exam failure to her heavy choir schedule. "I still had plenty of time to dedicate to my studies," she says. "I can't say that I failed in my studies because of my responsibilities as a singer for the Lord."

In 2007, Esther became president of the Works of God choir, which brought sensitive responsibilities. She leaned on God for support in such things as acquiring and learning new songs and in counseling the group. She encouraged her peers to engage in service to the Lord, because "gaining the reward for what you do for the Lord is

up to you and not anyone else.” She continues, “This reward is eternal life, which is precious for every child of God.”

In the same spirit, Esther dispenses moral advice to her charges—to respect each other, and to do your best in everything you do. She works constantly to mend relationships among the group members when the inevitable clashes erupt among the young people.

In her words of encouragement, Esther maintains that “the recompense, eternal life, comes in assenting to serve God according to the gift that everyone has received from his Holy Spirit.” She believes that this reward is earthly as well as heavenly.

Esther’s perseverance and faithfulness to God is manifest in her resistance to her father’s pressure to leave the CEM Sangilayi church and its activities. Her father left for personal reasons and wanted her to leave as well. But she insisted on staying true to her commitment to participate regularly in rehearsals, concerts, worship services, and other congregational meetings. One of her brothers has also tried, unsuccessfully, to dislodge her from the congregation.

Despite these differences, Esther says her family “rejoices to see me honor and fear God, unlike other young women my age who aren’t obedient to their parents and who take pleasure in the ways of the world.” Esther has been a reconciler in her father’s family. She recounts: “One of my aunts has had a grudge against her brothers, including my father. One day she came to our house and started to complain to me about her differences with her brothers. Without hesitating, I talked to her about the will of God in situations where one has been hurt by another. She was pacified by the words of the Bible, ‘Do not render evil for evil.’ My aunt immediately renounced her plans to set herself in conflict with her brothers.”

Esther also serves the Lord as an intercessor in the congregation. She testifies that this new ministry interests her as much as the choir ministry, and she has thrown herself into it wholeheartedly. She says, “The Lord whom I serve knows me and sustains me in my social life as well as my spiritual life. He has saved me in difficult situations and serious illnesses. God takes care of me and protects me from the vicissitudes of this world.” She has been tormented repeatedly by malaria. In 2006, for example, it brought on convulsions and she collapsed in church. But by the grace of God, she testifies, “my life was saved.”

Another church member testifies to Esther's effectiveness as an intercessor. A mother brought a sick baby for prayer. Esther prayed for three days, and the mother prayed as well. The baby was healed.

The Sangilayi congregation rejoices to have Esther as a member and as a servant of Christ in its midst.

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