



54 ❧ Civil servant, church planter

Lay leaders have been important to the spread of the church in Congo. One of these was Fulgence Palata.

Born in 1930, the young Palata was attached to his father and imitated his trade from an early age. His father wove branches and cut straw for building houses. His father taught him the trade but also sent him to school. Fulgence was baptized at Mukedi mission in 1948. He married Bernice Kisega in 1952 and they would have twelve children.

First he worked as a teacher at Malines, several miles from Mukedi. Next he worked for several years as an administrative clerk in Gungu Territory, where Mukedi was located. After independence and the Mulele Jeunesse rebellion, he was named assistant administrator of Gungu, Masi Manimba, and finally Idiofa territories.

It was in Idiofa that Fulgence Palata noticed that the Mennonite Church of Congo had no land and had not yet been planted. So, in his capacity as a civil administrator and with the collaboration of his friend Elie Kingambo, he founded a congregation, which later became a district of the denomination.

Certain Christians gathered around him to help construct the church. Because of his energy and engagement for the good of his people, the population asked him to run for office. He was elected head of the Lozo sector, a civil position he held for many years. He was a baptizer and church planter.

photo—Fulgence Palata

Thanks to his services, a large number of the youth of his territory found their way to school. He spoke to them unceasingly of Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, in whom they must put their confidence. Today the church benefits from the services of one of his sons, Pastor Jean Palata, head of Idiofa district.

Fulgence Palata died in 1997.

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