



87 ❧ Pillar of an unstable church

Monique Mutala was born into a Catholic family and married a Presbyterian, Albert Kambemba, in 1952, when she was just fourteen. Monique was only able to complete a few early years of elementary school. During her married life with Albert, she chose to become Presbyterian like her spouse. Together they had nine children, one of whom passed away.

The family eventually settled in Kabuela, where there was no Presbyterian church, so they became members of the Kasekeyi congregation of the Evangelical Mennonite Church. Albert also taught the word of God there, having been ordained pastor in the place from which he came. Albert died in 1992.

It was in 1998 that Monique Mutala became fully active in this congregation where she had become involved bit by bit. She became president of the women of the congregation. As a leader, Monique was characterized by zeal and enthusiasm. She herself declares the joy she experienced when everyone worked together in harmony to help the needy both in the congregation and in the local community. Monique was a great mobilizer. For example, she led the women in planting a manioc field measuring fifty square meters, from which nearly half the produce was sold and its income presented to the congregation to help purchase a sound system. She also brought a number of women to Christ during her eleven years as president of the women.

photo—Monique Mutala

Mama Monique demonstrated exceptional bravery and courage. Others didn't always listen to her or agree with her. Some accused her of being a dictator. She was often the object of gossip. In spite of all that, she remained connected to God, whose servant she is, and never dared give up her duties that the congregation entrusted to her. After she left the presidency of the group, she became its treasurer. In the face of the diminishing offerings and the falling away of the mothers in their service for God with their goods, Monique took it on herself to exhort them to participate in the work of the Lord with all that they received from their labors.

Monique is one of the rare mothers whose children all worship with her in her own church, where they all have responsibilities as influential members and servants of God. Mama Mutala recognizes unequivocally that it is the Lord who called her children to his service: "I was not capable of converting my children to God and making them his servants." She recognizes, however, that as a mother, each time she herself went to church, she always took care to bring them along. Monique reminds others repeatedly and with conviction of the Baluba proverb that says a child can never ignore who his parents are, because at their death this identity will be left to the child.

Trusting firmly in God, Mama Monique attests that the stability that she and her children experience, despite her widowhood, is the work of the Eternal himself, who has blessed her and her children in their studies, with stable marriages, and with children. Monique Mutala believes she has contributed to the growth of the Kasekeyi congregation not only by evangelizing women but also by adding her own children, their spouses, and her grandchildren. Monique expresses great joy in having served her God, and she believes the blessings that accompany her in her life are a reward from God for having served him in these ways.

But she is concerned about the well-being of her congregation. She deplores its poor management by a succession of pastors, who she says are not disposed to facilitate its growth. Monique observes with regret that these individuals are driving away the faithful rather than gathering them in, and she notes that most of those who leave are the women. Nevertheless, she continues to multiply her exhortations to them with the goal of renewing the unity and fellowship of the community.

She hopes that church authorities might send her congregation responsible leaders who will be concerned about its longevity and its development. “My fondest wish for CEM Kasekeyi is that, even though it is very unstable and always faced with problems of the sort that work against its progress—it has otherwise been very remarkable for a very long time—the high hierarchy of the CEM would think of sending a good pastor for its rehabilitation.”

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