



## 81 ❖ What if God visited my church and didn't find me?

Since the 1980s, Yvette Tshidibi has been a teacher of technical courses at the Kazadi High School of the Evangelical Mennonite Church (CEM) in Mbuji Mayi. But she did not become a member of the church in order to get the job. Rather, she believes God called her to the school, knowing that eventually she would be serving him in the church community.

In her youth, Yvette followed her parents to the Catholic church, in which they were fervent, practicing believers. She has a four-year degree in sewing from a Protestant secondary school. She has been divorced and has seven children with more than one husband.

It was in 2000 that Mama Yvette Tshidibi was first counted in the membership statistics of the Ditalala CEM congregation. "I truly encountered God at the Ditalala CEM because of the teachings of my pastors and elders of the church, who gave me peace, because before that I was a restless, unruly woman, dissatisfied in life and nervous."

After encountering God, Yvette affirms having gone to him and been heard by him: "I've been worshiping for ten years in Ditalala. Here, more than elsewhere, I understood that God listens to me, because he saved my year-and-a-half-old son after a serious and violent illness that the doctors of this world didn't succeed in treating."

At the church she ministers through intercessory prayer and as a leader of women. Yvette was named president of the women's

photo—Yvette Tshidibi

group in 2007. Her role consists of exhorting the women to behave in a way worthy of Christian women, and breaking up cliques in the interest of community service to the Lord. “Thanks to this exhortation, all the sin born of envy, disdain, and denigration has ceased, and all of us have peace in our parish,” she says.

Preaching by example is important to Yvette, so she actively participates in all acts of service organized in her parish. “My participation in the work of God has awakened many people, especially the women, and pushed them to serve God as I do.”

A tireless intercessor, Yvette Tshidibi has many proofs of the intervention of God in the many cases she has submitted to him: “The peace of heart that I have is something of great importance that I have gained in my Christian life.” She adds, “When I pray for something with which to serve him, I receive an answer promptly and miraculously.” One time she was hoping to participate in a training seminar on Christian education. Participants were expected to contribute to the costs of running the seminar. The Lord’s help came to her when she had barely finished praying, only a few hours before the beginning of the seminar. A woman brought Yvette an order for children’s clothes to be sewn. The money was enough to cover her contribution to the seminar as well as her transportation.

Yvette has offered her services to other local churches, Protestant and Catholic, as the residents of her neighborhood have found her to be a level-headed Christian. The Saints of Salvation church has gone so far as to propose that Yvette stay with them. But she has never accepted, believing that her place is at the CEM. She laughingly tells them, “If you keep me here, what would happen if God visited the CEM and didn’t find me there?”

Jean Félix Chimbalanga