



85 ❧ All the arrows of the devil

François Mbuyi saw that the pastor of the Evangelical Mennonite Church (CEM) Kasekeyi congregation in Kabuela needed help. François at twenty-five had just landed in Kabuela. He had been a member of the Presbyterian community in his home territory, Kanda. When he was looking for a church home in Kabuela, the charismatic churches didn't appeal to him. "The doctrine and rites did not please me at all," he says. So, without being evangelized by anyone, he decided in 1996 to become a member of the CEM Kasekeyi congregation, who welcomed and included the young man.

François offered his services as a hymn leader, preacher, and intercessor. After getting agreement in principle from Pastor Tshiakatumba,¹ François became totally involved in serving God in these ministries. He turned out to be such a good preacher that the pulpit was occasionally handed over to him both at midweek meetings and during Sunday worship. Many old and new believers were strengthened in their faith in Christ by the teachings given by this young servant of God, who quickly earned a good reputation in the congregation.

In addition to these ministries, François Mbuyi was elected secretary of the Kasekeyi congregation, charged with recording all parish decisions taken at meetings of congregational councils, with maintaining the group's statistics, and with managing all the fi-

photo—François Mbuyi

1 See "A great pastor who turned the other cheek" (chapter 58).

nances and assets. His call to exercise these functions was, he said, “the Lord’s reaction to the poor performance of my predecessors, who had caused the faithful to lose confidence because of their carelessness—or more precisely, their neglect of the Lord’s work.” On top of all that, in 2007 François Mbuyi was consecrated as deacon of the congregation. As a deacon, he is called to keep the property and funds and to keep the church records. François has an ease with statistics and reports. Without thinking or referring to documents, he can tell you that Kasekeyi CEM has “eighty-five members and a hundred-thirty children.”

François Mbuyi was married to Ngalula, and together they had six children. In 2008 he married a second wife. Because of this, Pastor Tshibangu Munanga stripped him of the right to preach the word of God.

The unilateral decision took François by surprise. Although it violates a rule of the Anabaptists, François believes that having two wives cannot in any way silence a gift. However, as a child of God, he ended up submitting to the orders of the leader of the congregation, who he believes has the duty to apply the doctrine and laws of the church. But Mbuyi still is not convinced that the word of God has recorded that the Lord withdraws a gift, whatever it may be, from one who has married two or more women.

Nevertheless, he acknowledges that having the gift to teach the word of God does not mean he should be ordained either elder or pastor. In fact, François asserts that the Lord does not want him to be ordained. “If God does not want to make me pastor, I am unable to make myself pastor; and if I managed to have two wives in my life, it may be because God does not want me to serve as a pastor.”

Needless to say, this incident created a stir among the faithful. François experienced other difficulties as well, related to his role as the treasurer of the congregation. He says he has been the object of slander by those who envied his position. He has been accused of diverting money from the parish or of being behind those responsible for doing so.

Despite these accusations, François remains constant in faith in God and to this day remains a member of the congregation where he served for fourteen years as congregational secretary and treasurer. “Those who know we are reliable in what we do testify to it, and are also pleased with the reports that we present,” he says. “When it is

said of me that I have worked well, I feel that both God and men are pleased. And it is my joy to contribute to the sustainability of the work of the Most High.”

François believes that because he is in God’s service, God protects him and his family and blesses his undertakings. It is thanks to God, François recognizes, that he and his household were spared after being struck by lightning. “The Lord saved me, for I was struck, my house and all my property burned, but my wife, my children, and I got out safely.” François also credits the Lord for bringing him through a serious traffic accident, in which several people were killed, with only a broken arm.

He states that he has a firm faith, because “when problems arise in my ministries, I have the courage to say yes or no, when necessary, to such and such actions of men.” He recognizes the hand of the Eternal in his work and plans, “protecting me against all the arrows of the devil.”

Jean Félix Chimbalanga