



## 61 ❧ A singer-songwriter's debt of gratitude

José Tshiakatumba's parents took him to a charismatic church in Mbuji Mayi when he was a child, and he found God there. But it was music that brought him to the Sangilayi congregation of the Evangelical Mennonite Church (CEM). When he was fifteen, in 1989, he was attracted to the songs performed by that congregation's World Revival Choir, Chorémon, and he became a member of the choir. "I sang as I had to sing for my Lord," he says.

José soon became a composer for the choir. His first composition was "We are a people of our Lord Jesus"; his latest is "I adore you, Lord Jesus," which reminds Christians that there is only one master worthy of worship: "What Jesus has done in the world is visible. He is the only one to have been put to death and who rose from the dead, unlike all those who have claimed it before and after him."

The hymns he composed are a legacy of Chorémon and accompany the Sangilayi congregation's evangelistic outreach across the CEM. José's music ministry has brought other young people to Christ, including René Katombe, current president of the Sangilayi youth, who had Mennonite parents. For him, says José, "I am a role model in the world of music."

Besides serving as a singer-songwriter, José Tshiakatumba has also served his Lord as an evangelist, first for the Youth for Christ of CEM Sangilayi (1992), and then as assistant to the evangelist in

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photo—José Tshiakatumba

the same congregation, from 2001 to this day. He himself was the speaker at one memorable three-day campaign that he organized at the Sangilayi congregation. New souls were won to Christ, including many who today are influential members of the congregation. José had the honor of having his parents and an uncle participate in this evangelistic campaign.

In addition, he served as provincial president of Youth for Christ of East Kasai from 2001 to 2003. He embarked on tours in several communities outside Mbuji Mayi to raise young people's awareness of Anabaptist doctrine and how they can support God's work. He moved to Kinshasa, capital of Congo, in 2003. Within days after joining the CEM Bumbu congregation in Kinshasa, José was named vice president of CEM youth in Kinshasa, a position he continues to exercise.

José Tshiakatumba is recognized as the initiator (in 2001) of morning devotions in Sangilayi: "It is because of a thirst for prayer that I was led to organize the prayer meeting that continues to be held in my congregation," he says.

José was baptized in 1994 at Sangilayi by Pastor Pascal Blaise Misakayabo.<sup>1</sup> A few years ago he married the pastor's youngest daughter, Annie Kanyanga, and they have a little girl.

"Recognizing Jesus as Lord and Savior is the first duty of every Christian," José says. "It is through this recognition that Jesus blessed my undertakings and gives me, in the proper measure, what I need." Because of this, José said he does not need to be repaid by the church for all he has done: "It's CEM and CEM Sangilayi who made it possible for me to find the way of salvation by training me and showing me who is my Savior." And so, he admits, "It is rather I who owe a debt to my congregation and to my community."

Jean Félix Chimalanga

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1 See "The desire to belong to one body" (chapter 59).