



## **This is the testimony of Gloriasse, a survivor of the Rwandan genocide**

I am twenty-nine years old, and live and look after my five brothers and sisters. They all go to school. I had to drop out of school to look after them. The reason I am alive now is because God guided me; nobody helped me or protected me during the genocide

I was studying in the first year of Secondary School in Kigali. It was the Easter holidays, and our family was altogether. There were nine of us children in all, and my parents.

After the death of the president, the killers came to our house. As we tried to flee they threw a grenade into the house, which wounded us all. They then used their machetes, killing my parents and three of my brothers and sisters. The killers thought we were all dead, but six of us although wounded managed to crawl away, once the attackers had looted our house and left. They had left the house saying they would bury us later.

We joined the exodus of refugees escaping the carnage, and headed towards Gitarama province. We thought the killings were only happening in Kigali; we had no idea the whole country would be engulfed with massacres of Tutsis.

The journey was difficult. The grenade had burnt my leg and part of my shoulder, and as I had no treatment except bandages, these parts of my body were beginning to rot. I was also dehydrated. But I didn't want to hold the team back, so I kept going. At one point, I was so exhausted I asked God to let me die.

We had to pass through valleys and bushes to avoid the killers. At one point we got lost, and could go neither back nor forward because the roads were all so full of interahamwe. We decided to hide in the valley to wait to see what was going to happen. There were many people who were also hiding there. In fact the number increased to nearly 15,000 men, women and children



None of us had food and we only drank the river water that passed through the valley. It did not take long for the Interahamwe to finally find out that so many people were hiding in the valley. When they came, they began the killing again, throwing thousands of bodies into the river. The stream of water running down the valley turned to red, with the blood of us Tutsis. The killers concentrated on finishing off the men and children, keeping the girls and women aside.

Once they had finished the killing frenzy they ordered all us to take our clothes and put them in one pile. Then like animals they dragged women and girls into bushes and raped them. There were many screams and crying. Most of us were weak and hungry, and could not put up a fight. None of the people I started the journey survived. They were all killed and now lay somewhere down the river valley. Possibly they now lie in Lake Victoria.

We were eventually rescued from the valley. By then, my body was all swollen and my skin had become white. I was given shelter in an orphanage until I found that my five siblings had survived and were living in another orphanage.

I finally was able to reunite my remaining family and now at least have a house that provides shelter, though not justice.

**Today's Reading of the Testimonies marks the 15<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Rwandan genocide, in support of survivors like Gloriasse.**