

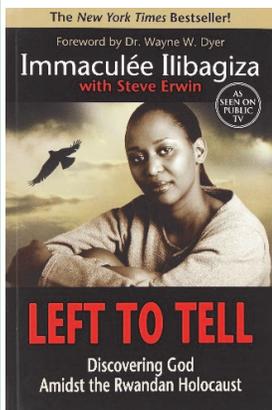
Letter From The Pastor: Msgr. William L. Young, III



Dear Parishioners:

Our readings today challenge you and me to a high bar especially the Gospel's call to forgive your brother not seven times but seventy-seven times [Mt. 18:22]. Forgiving others can be most difficult for us because of the hurt, anger, desperation, and lack of hope. Pain, at times, does not dissipate easily. It can seem almost inhuman to forgive one who killed a relative, brutalized a child, and so many other horrible things that people do to themselves and others.

But the Scriptures never retreat from the need for us to forgive over and over again. Forgiveness is an aspect of divine mercy, God's most stupendous quality (St. John Paul II, Rich in Mercy). Some might ask if this is just too much for a human being, but Jesus words today do not allow that as an answer. The invitation to merciful forgiveness is an invitation to a sincere surrender of oneself to our Father's heart for all his children, even those who hate us.



Immaculée Ilibagiza is a survivor of the Rwandan genocide of 1994. She and seven other women hid in a 3' x 4' bathroom for 91 days. They spent these days with little to eat, not able to use the toilet lest they be discovered, not talking, etc. She weighed 65 pounds when they finally were able to leave that room and found a refugee camp. She learned that her parents and two of her brothers were killed by former friends and neighbors. Her father's body was used as part of a road block. In those three months about 1,000,000 Rwandan Tutsi were slaughtered by rival Hutus. It is difficult to understand how friends and family can turn against each other, but it happens. Immaculée tells her story in her book, *Left to Tell, Discovering God Amidst the Rwandan Holocaust*, available in paperback and Kindle editions.

This is a story of a woman who endured excruciating pain, horror, and loss, but who discovered the power of healing and grace. She writes in her introduction:

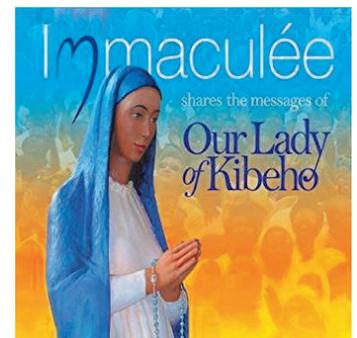
"The killers moved from the house and we all began to breath again. They were gone, but they would be back many times over the next three months. I believe that God has spared my life, but I'd learn during the next 91 days I spent trembling in fear with seven others in closet sized bathroom that being spared is much different from being saved ... and this lesson forever changed me. It is a lesson that, in the midst of mass murder, taught me how to love those who hated and haunted me— and how to forgive those who slaughtered my family. My name is Immaculée Ilibagiza. This is the story of how I discovered God during one of history's bloodiest holocausts."

I might be able to make all kinds of theological arguments about forgiveness and the even the necessity of suffering. But the way to explain the lived reality I think it is very good to listen to those who have lived it. I include two examples of Immaculée's presentation or interviews. They are informative and offer you and me insight into how God can work in one's life:

<https://youtu.be/0LO2bycPdpQ> - EWTN Live
<https://youtu.be/g3v7gyK2NkE> - The Power of Forgiveness

She also refers to the message of Kibeho in her book, *Our Lady of Kibeho: Mary Speaks to the World from the Heart of Africa*. Jesus' mother has a way of helping us understand the immensity of God's mercy and love.

The Rwandan genocide was evil in so many ways and can never be justified in any aspect. Yet out of this tragedy God raised up a woman who now speaks of peace and forgiveness. God's merciful forgiveness can bring life and love from to greatest of evils. Never, never, never will Satan win unless we surrender our souls to him. Immaculée would do no such thing and we are better off for her example.



Pace – bene,

Msgr. Bill