

LEFT TO TELL by Immaculee Ilibagiza

Thank you for participating in this book study. The attached page includes four chapter reviews along with chapter reflection questions. This review was created to be a conversation starter for others to add their own personal thoughts as well. Each page ends with an optional scripture passage. It is great to begin and close a group discussion with prayer. Please feel free to use your favorite prayer, spontaneous prayer, have the group participate in personal petitions, or use the prayers below. If you need more assistance or would like to give any feedback please contact Sherry at RCIA@christcatholic.com or call 320-333-9315.

The Our Father

Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come;
thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread;
and forgive us our trespasses
as we forgive those who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
Amen.

The Hail Mary

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with you;
blessed are you among women,
and blessed is the fruit of your womb, Jesus.
Holy Mary, Mother of God,
pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death.
Amen.

Glory Be

Glory be to the Father
and to the Son
and to the Holy Spirit,
as it was in the beginning
is now, and ever shall be
world without end.
Amen.

LEFT TO TELL by Immaculee Ilibagiza

PART I Highlights - THE GATHERING STORM - Chapters 1-4

Chapter 1 - The Eternal Spring

- The name Ilibagiza means 'shining and beautiful in body and soul'.
- Immaculee's childhood was a paradise, she grew up in a devout Catholic family.
- She was unaware of division, prejudice, racism, no fear of violence, and she trusted everyone.
- Immaculee's parents taught strong values: hard work, prayer and devotion to the Virgin Mary.
- Her parents were looked up to. She had three brothers: Aimable, Damascene, and Vianney.
 - Describe your childhood memories. Was it a paradise like Immaculee?
 - What values were learned in your family when you were growing up?
 - Did your family or parents participate in the community or church?

Chapter 2 - Standing Up

- Immaculee remembers an ethnic roll call at age ten. Her teacher discloses what tribe she is.
- The Hutu tribe made up the majority, Tutsi was the minority, then a few from the Twa tribe.
- All were welcome in her family home no matter race, religion, or tribe.
- Tribe division was something her parents never discussed at home.
- Her father found a way to get her into a private school where she tested into college.
 - What is your first memory of racism or ethnic difference?
 - Have you ever been told you're different, or that you do not belong?
 - What would life be like if you needed to forgive those you encounter every day?
 - Where are prejudices or destructive divisions happening in our community or world?

Chapter 3: Higher Learning

- Immaculee describes a group of Tutsi's who desire a free and equal country.
- The first signs of war in Rwanda bring fear, exaggeration, and imaginations run wild.
- There is evidence of dishonesty from those seeking power.
- Immaculee arrives home to find her father had been arrested.
- She is shocked when her father forgives those who arrested him.
 - When in your life did you stand up for much needed change?
 - When has dishonesty by leaders caused division in your community or country?
 - Do you believe the severity of misunderstanding makes forgiveness easier?

Chapter 4: Off to University

- Celebrating Immaculee's scholarship lightens the mood of the growing war.
- College life was exhilarating. She attended church and belonged to a prayer group.
- Immaculee meets a boy named John. Two years go by and the war rages on.
- Lawless street gangs are formed. Immaculee witnesses a mugging.
- Immaculee confronts the evil gang despite her brother's disapproval. She prays for God's help.
 - What events did your family celebrate outside of holidays?
 - What injustice angers you? Did you ever confront an injustice demanding justice?
 - When an injustice is made right is forgiveness easier?
 - When have you prayed earnestly for God's protection?

Psalm 128 A song of ascents.

Blessed are all who fear the LORD, and who walk in his ways. What your hands provide you will enjoy; you will be blessed and prosper: Your wife will be like a fruitful vine within your home, Your children like young olive plants around your table.

1 Corinthians 1:10 I urge you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree in what you say, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and in the same purpose.

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PART I Highlights - THE GATHERING STORM - Chapters 5-8

Prayer to St. Michael the Archangel

St. Michael the Archangel,
defend us in battle.
Be our defense against the wickedness and snares of
the Devil.
May God rebuke him, we humbly pray,
and do thou,
O Prince of the heavenly hosts,
by the power of God,
thrust into hell Satan,
and all the evil spirits,
who prowl about the world
seeking the ruin of souls. Amen.

The Hail Mary

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with you;
blessed are you among women,
and blessed is the fruit of your womb, Jesus.
Holy Mary, Mother of God,
pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our
death.
Amen.

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PART I Highlights - THE GATHERING STORM - Chapters 5-8

Chapter 5: Returning Home

- A peace agreement is signed but this causes more violence.
- The media reports are disturbing.
- Immaculee visits home to learn her family is on a 'hit list' to be killed.
- They have dinner together one night unaware it would be their last as a family.
- The President is assassinated.
 - What is your experience with being threatened in any way?
 - What helps you stay close to God and remain positive even through trials?
 - How can we be people of love in a world that is often hateful?

Chapter 6: No Going Back

- Immaculee and her family are confined to their home with only a radio.
- Her brother is losing hope but Immaculee encourages them not to lose faith or hope.
- The killings bring 2000 locals to gather at Immaculee's home. 2000 quickly becomes 10,000.
- Immaculee was proud how her father encouraged all those gathered to be strong and have faith.
- Immaculee and her father exchange sacramentals. She enters hiding, leaving her family behind.
 - Describe an opportunity you had to give others the encouragement they needed.
 - What precious gift do you treasure that was given to you by someone you love?
 - What are some things that you are hopeful for?

Chapter 7: The Pastor's House

- Immaculee and Augustine run from the killers, former friends now treat them differently.
- Immaculee finds the strength to stay grounded in the faith that God would help her.
- Damascene tells how the house burned down. Vianney tells how their parents flee on the cycle.
- Immaculee realizes we all need hope to survive and says a painful goodbye to Damascene.
 - When has a traumatic event led you to hold tight to faith and hope?
 - Has a life changing experience demanded strength you didn't realize you had?
 - Did someone you trust ever become someone you could not trust?

Chapter 8: Farewell to the Boys

- Five more Tutsi women join Immaculee at the Pastor's house.
- As screams outside get louder the women scramble for a place to hide.
- They hide in the ceiling but the Pastor asks them to come down.
- Vianney and Augustine have to leave the Pastor's house. This is hard for Immaculee.
 - How has the hand of God helped different characters in these first chapters?
 - Describe a time you struggled to forgive.
 - Was there a time in your life when you realized all you had was prayer?

Ephesians 6:10-17 Battle against Evil

Finally, draw your strength from the Lord and from his mighty power. Put on the armor of God so that you may be able to stand firm against the tactics of the devil. For our struggle is not with flesh and blood but with the principalities, with the powers, with the world rulers of this present darkness, with the evil spirits in the heavens. Therefore, put on the armor of God, that you may be able to resist on the evil day and, having done everything, to hold your ground. So stand fast with your loins girded in truth, clothed with righteousness as a breastplate, and your feet shod in readiness for the gospel of peace. In all circumstances, hold faith as a shield, to quench all [the] flaming arrows of the evil one. And take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

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Highlights from PART II - IN HIDING

Prayer for Strength to Forgive

Catholic Online Prayers

Faultless Lord, enduring death for me,
You have consummated the debt of my sins:
Your sacrifice of forgiveness was absolute!
Grant me the strength to also forgive others,
To excuse their transgressions against me.
So I may truly reflect this spiritual fruit,
Obliterate any persistent feelings of malice.
Let each trespass end as a closing chapter,
My continuing on the road of righteousness.
Forgive my sins as I aspire to forgive others.
You are truly the original model of forgiveness.
You are a most forgiving Lord!

A Prayer for Hope

Catholic Online Prayers

Heavenly father, I am your humble servant,
I come before you today in need of hope.
There are times when I feel helpless,
There are times when I feel weak.
I pray for hope.
I need hope for a better future.
I need hope for a better life.
I need hope for love and kindness.
Some say that the sky is at its darkest just before the light.
I pray that this is true, for all seems dark.
I need your light, Lord, in every way.
I pray to be filled with your light from head to toe. To bask in your glory.
To know that all is right in the world,
as you have planned, and as you want it to be.
Help me to walk in your light, and live my life in faith and glory.
In your name I pray, Amen.

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Highlights from PART II - IN HIDING

Chapter 9: Into the Bathroom

- The Pastor puts six women into a small bathroom to hide, giving specific instructions.
- After one night they are exhausted, hungry, cramped, and hot. After two days they eat.
- The killers can be heard outside. Immaculee peeks out a window and regrets it.
- Immaculee begins her prayers, her rosary is her lifeline to God. The devil tempts her.
- Immaculee realizes the battle to survive this war will be fought inside of herself.
- Immaculee urges the Pastor to place the wardrobe in front of the bathroom door.
 - When have you realized surviving a battle needed to come from within you?
 - What would you say is your lifeline to God?

Chapter 10: Confronting My Anger

- The women were able to stretch every twelve hours.
- Immaculee's prayer became more intense.
- The Pastor tells the women how bad things are, the killers will not stop until all Tutsis are dead.
- The first message of a possible rescue comes over the radio.
 - When have you waited with intense hope for an answer to prayer?
 - Describe a time you experienced the most physical pain. What did you learn from the experience?

Chapter 11: Struggling to Forgive

- Immaculee struggles to forgive or pray for the killers. The women were almost found by the killers.
- Immaculee prays desperately needing God's protection.
- She struggles with the war in her soul. It is difficult to pray to God with hate in her heart.
- Immaculee prays for God to teach her to forgive.
- God tells Immaculee "You are all My children", the answer she needed to hear.
 - Describe the feeling of knowing hate in your heart didn't belong there.
 - When have you prayed for the ability to forgive?

Chapter 12: No Friends to Turn To

- A small corner in Immaculee's heart is all she has to call her own. This place becomes the source of her faith, strengthens her soul, and is her refuge.
- Immaculee meditates on single words: forgive, faith, hope, and surrender.
- Pastor shares the belief of false statements about Immaculee's father. She is hunted by the killers.
- Immaculee gets a bible and begins with Psalm 91
 - What scripture passage is your 'go-to' passage? Why?
 - During your day-to-day life, is there a sanctuary place where you pray and feel closest to God?

Psalm 91

You who dwell in the shelter of the Most High, who abide in the shade of the Almighty, say to the LORD, "My refuge and fortress, my God in whom I trust." He will rescue you from the fowler's snare, from the destroying plague, He will shelter you with his pinions, and under his wings you may take refuge; his faithfulness is a protecting shield. You shall not fear the terror of the night nor the arrow that flies by day, Nor the pestilence that roams in darkness, nor the plague that ravages at noon. Though a thousand fall at your side, ten thousand at your right hand, near you it shall not come. You need simply watch; the punishment of the wicked you will see. Because you have the LORD for your refuge and have made the Most High your stronghold, no evil shall befall you, no affliction come near your tent. For he commands his angels with regard to you, to guard you wherever you go.

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Highlights from PART II - IN HIDING

Chapter 13: A Gathering of Orphans

- After one month the Pastor is worried about food.
- Immaculee realizes they would not stay alive for an hour outside the bathroom.
- Immaculee's heart became a slice of heaven where she spoke to the Holy Spirit.
- Immaculee prayed and medicated fifteen to twenty hours per day.
- In the midst of this genocide Immaculee found her salvation.
- Two more women join the bathroom group.
- Jesus appears to Immaculee in a dream.
 - When along your faith journey did you begin using the eyes and ears of your heart in prayer?
 - Describe a message you received that you know in your heart came from Jesus.

Chapter 14: The Gift of Tongues

- Seven weeks go by. With a severe case of body lice Immaculee never felt more beautiful.
- Surviving illnesses, Immaculee realizes God has a greater purpose for her.
- Immaculee thinks she will one day work at the UN and needs to learn English.
- Immaculee realizes she will always refer to her life as before or after the genocide.
- John comes to the bathroom to visit.
 - Knowing God's will for us is not easy. When in your life did you realize God's purpose for you?
 - What was the most challenging achievement in your life so far?

Chapter 15: Unlikely Saviors

- The French soldiers set up safe havens. Immaculee asks to go to the French soldiers.
- The pastor lets the women watch a movie.
- The pastor is very scared when he learns the killers are on the way to his house once again.
 - Describe the greatest sacrifice someone else has ever made for you.
 - What is the greatest sacrifice you have ever made for someone?

Chapter 16: Keeping the Faith

- Jesus appears to Immaculee in a dream and tells her to trust Him, He will save her.
- The houseboy realizes they are hiding in the bathroom.
- The pastor arranges for the women to reach the safe haven.
 - When in your life's journey have you come close to losing faith?
 - Describe a time you shared a traumatic experience with someone. How has the shared experience changed your relationship?

1 Corinthians 13:4-8

Love is patient, love is kind. It is not jealous, love is not pompous, it is not inflated, it is not rude, it does not seek its own interests, it is not quick-tempered, it does not brood over injury, it does not rejoice over wrongdoing but rejoices with the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails.

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Highlights from PART III - A NEW PATH

Prayer for Strength to Forgive

Catholic Online Prayers

Faultless Lord, enduring death for me,
You have consummated the debt of my sins:
Your sacrifice of forgiveness was absolute!
Grant me the strength to also forgive others,
To excuse their transgressions against me.
So I may truly reflect this spiritual fruit,
Obliterate any persistent feelings of malice.
Let each trespass end as a closing chapter,
My continuing on the road of righteousness.
Forgive my sins as I aspire to forgive others.
You are truly the original model of forgiveness.
You are a most forgiving Lord!

A Prayer for Hope

Catholic Online Prayers

Heavenly father, I am your humble servant,
I come before you today in need of hope.
There are times when I feel helpless,
There are times when I feel weak.
I pray for hope.
I need hope for a better future.
I need hope for a better life.
I need hope for love and kindness.
Some say that the sky is at its darkest just before the light.
I pray that this is true, for all seems dark.
I need your light, Lord, in every way.
I pray to be filled with your light from head to toe. To bask in your glory.
To know that all is right in the world,
as you have planned, and as you want it to be.
Help me to walk in your light, and live my life in faith and glory.
In your name I pray, Amen.

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Highlights from PART III - A NEW PATH

Chapter 17: The Pain of Freedom

- The women, escorted out the bathroom, reach the safe haven with overwhelming relief.
- Immaculee absorbs time alone, and realizes how wonderful it is to be free.
- Meeting friends at the camp they discuss how the hearts of good people are now filled with evil.
- Immaculee hears her family is dead. Arriving at another camp she finds her cousins in worse shape.
- Immaculee receives a letter from her brother Damascene.
 - Where in our world today do you see hardened hearts similar to those in this chapter?
 - Describe a time you found strength from deep within to keep moving forward.

Chapter 18: A Letter from Damascene

- Immaculee learns the details of Damascene's attempt to flee and his murder.
 - When in your life has your heart been filled to the top with sorrow?
 - Was forgiveness part of the sorrow you carried?

Chapter 19: Camp Comfort

- Immaculee makes friends with a captain who offers her a revenge she does not desire.
- Immaculee helps by recording the names and stories of all who enter the camp.
- Florence tells her story. Immaculee tells Florence how they are both 'left to tell'.
- The famous Aloise arrives, a friend of Immaculee's mother, who wants to help Immaculee.
- Immaculee and nine other refugees become a family.
 - Have you ever desired revenge? Was revenge ever transformed into forgiveness?
 - In what ways is your faith journey similar to the faith Immaculee has?

Chapter 20: The Road to the Rebels

- The safe haven closes, Immaculee and the refugees come face to face with killers.
- Immaculee goes for help and prays for God to protect them.
 - How do you hold on to hope even when walking toward disaster?
 - Where would you turn if you were denied after begging for mercy?

Psalm 23:4

Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff comfort me.

Romans 12:9-21 Mutual Love

Let love be sincere; hate what is evil, hold on to what is good; love one another with mutual affection; anticipate one another in showing honor. Do not grow slack in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, endure in affliction, persevere in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the holy ones, exercise hospitality. Bless those who persecute [you], bless and do not curse them. Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. Have the same regard for one another; do not be haughty but associate with the lowly; do not be wise in your own estimation. Do not repay anyone evil for evil; be concerned for what is noble in the sight of all. If possible, on your part, live at peace with all. Beloved, do not look for revenge but leave room for the wrath; for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord." Rather, "if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals upon his head." Do not be conquered by evil but conquer evil with good.

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Highlights from PART III - A NEW PATH

Chapter 21: On to Kigali

- Miraculously the refugees arrive at the RPF camp.
- The Major cannot forgive the killers until he kills them himself.
- The attempt to bury the dead in mass graves is appalling.
- Immaculee realizes she will need to leave Rwanda to fully heal.
 - What are the little ways God lets you know you are never alone?
 - Describe a time you survived having little or nothing to your name.

Chapter 22: The Lord's Work

- Immaculee tirelessly seeks to find a job at the UN, and misses her private prayer time.
- Immaculee visits her dorm room to find belongings and \$30!
- Pierre finds Immaculee a job. Immaculee's friend Sarah appears just in time with an invitation.
- Immaculee writes a letter to her brother Aimable with very sad news.
 - Describe your experience of delivering bad news to someone you love..
 - What is the best way to support those carrying sorrow and grief?

Chapter 23: Burying the Dead

- Immaculee returns to her childhood home. She describes “her soul at war with itself”.
- As Immaculee prepares to bury her family she has moments of regretting the desire to forgive.
- Reaching the limit of her pain Immaculee notices those around her have lost faith and hope.
 - Has your soul struggled with the ability to forgive? Why is this so difficult?
 - When life brings you to your limit, what happens to your faith and hope?

Chapter 24: Forgiving the Living

- Immaculee prays to be released from her private agony.
- Immaculee's family appears in a wonderful dream encouraging her to forgive the killers.
- Immaculee comes face to face with her family's killer saying “forgiveness is all I have to offer”.
 - Why can Immaculee forgive but so many others cannot?
 - Describe a time you received the peace and joy that comes with forgiveness.

2 Corinthians 13:11-12

Finally, brothers, rejoice. Mend your ways, encourage one another, agree with one another, live in peace, and the God of love and peace will be with you.

Hebrews 11:1-6 Faith of the Ancients

Faith is the realization of what is hoped for and evidence of things not seen. Because of it the ancients were well attested. By faith we understand that the universe was ordered by the word of God, so that what is visible came into being through the invisible. But without faith it is impossible to please him, for anyone who approaches God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.

Isaiah 40: 25-31

The LORD is God from of old, creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary, and his knowledge is beyond scrutiny. He gives power to the faint, abundant strength to the weak. Though young men faint and grow weary, and youths stagger and fall, They that hope in the LORD will renew their strength, they will soar on eagles' wings; They will run and not grow weary, walk and not grow faint.