



# Peace in Hard Times

*A lesson for families*

SUSIE LLOYD

**A** beautiful woman travels the world giving talks about God. She talks to an average of 2,000 people per week. Why do so many people listen? It is because she knows God intimately.

Her name is Immaculée Ilibagiza. Back in her native land of Rwanda, in East Africa, she was once hunted down and marked for murder. The killers were her own neighbors and friends. Some had eaten dinner at her house. Why had they turned against her? They were Hutu; she was Tutsi. According to a carefully planned media campaign, the ethnic group to which she belonged was labeled a threat and targeted for extermination.

Immaculée survived the 1994 Rwandan genocide by hiding in a tiny bathroom with seven other women — for three straight months. When she finally got out, she learned that her captives had killed her mother, father, and two of her brothers. The youngest one was still a boy.

During her first days in hiding, Immaculée wanted revenge. But she turned to God, and to Mary, his Immaculate Mother. She asked for and received the grace to forgive. Morning, noon, and night she prayed the Rosary, using a set of rosary beads her father had given her as a parting gift.

The set of beads wasn't the only gift her father gave her.



Immaculée Ilibagiza

Long before this tragedy ever happened, her father and mother gave her a prayer life and moral formation.

They had had a good life — a nice home, good jobs, and, unlike many of their neighbors, higher educations. They had worked especially hard for these things because Tutsis were often excluded from scholarships or other forms of assistance. They were successful, but they did not pat themselves on the back or focus on getting more and better things. They

put the goods they possessed at the service of their neighbors.

“My parents were missionaries in the home,” Immaculée says. “Every day at the dinner table, the talk was about a neighbor who was sick, who didn’t have money to go to the doctor, or go to school.” The charity her parents showed started in the home, as the saying goes. “We loved each other. We prayed together every single night. [We had] a normal, simple life with values at the core.” Her parents taught their kids “not to insult each other, not to say bad words.” Immaculée was brought up in the presence of God. Then, when all those she loved were suddenly taken from her, she was not alone. God was with her still.

Give your children a reliance on God in good times, and they will turn to him in bad times. Rather than pat yourself on the back and focus on getting more things if you are successful, ask him to help you use your success to serve others. Teach your children kindness in the home. Pray with them every night. Then, when times get tough, which they do in every life, your children will know that God is there always, holding them in the palm of his hand. They will receive even more grace, as Immaculée did when she forgave her family’s killers, and like her, they will receive peace in their hearts.



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**SUSIE LLOYD** has won three Catholic Press Awards for her writing. Find her books, articles, and speaking schedule at

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