

This is the testimony of Valentine, a survivor of the Rwandan genocide

That fateful day, April 9, is when they attacked my husband's house because they considered him to be a sympathizer with the RPF.

We had just ended our honeymoon. We had been married for three months, and I was two months pregnant, carrying a little girl.

The head of the militias was ruthless and put a spear in my leg to force my legs apart. I was raped every night, and during the day, they locked me in. A man, who had been a friend of my husband's, pretended to be kind, saying that he would take me to his house, that they had wreaked enough havoc on me. He asked his wife to let me sleep on the bed because I was pregnant and had gone through difficult things. She allowed it, but whenever she left the house, he came and raped me.

When I was in a refugee camp in Congo, I gave birth to my daughter.

Fortunately, she was alive. I stayed there and was raped by that man and other men as they wished. Shortly afterward, I became pregnant again. One day, I boarded a truck that was bringing people back to Rwanda. When we arrived, I learned the news of my family: they had all been killed. I had two sisters and three brothers—they all died. I am the only survivor in my family. My mother and father and five grown children died. I am the only survivor, but I have my two children.

It took me a long time to be able to sit and talk like we are sitting here now. I went to the Association of Widows of Genocide, where I received counselling and support. They encouraged me to talk.

I love my first daughter more because I gave birth to her as a result of love. Her father was my husband. The second girl is a result of unwanted circumstance. I never loved her father. My love is divided, but slowly, I am beginning to appreciate that the younger daughter is innocent. Before, when she was a baby, I left her crying. When it came to feeding, I fed the older one more than the younger one, until people in the neighborhood reminded me that was not the proper thing to do. I love her only now that I am beginning to appreciate that she is my daughter too. My cousin is also a lone survivor.

We gather courage together and talk about our experiences during the genocide, but we have not revealed everything to the young girl - she thinks she is like her sister.

Today's Reading of the Testimonies marks the 15th Anniversary of the Rwandan genocide, in support of survivors like Valentine.