

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

I was with my younger brother and another Tutsi girl behind my home in Butare town when four soldiers and two civilians took us by surprise. I knew one of them; he and one of the soldiers took me inside and the soldier raped me.

He forced me to lie down on the mattress. I refused. Immediately he raised his bayonet to me, saying that he had thought of raping me and letting me live, but now he was going to rape me and kill me afterwards.

I was engulfed with fear and gave in. He did exactly what he wanted to do and left me bleeding and vomiting. After he left, the man I knew came in. He hit me hard and mocked me. He asked me who my parents were and I told him, believing that he would then spare me. Instead, he hit me even more. Our family gave what money we had between us. I had 50,000 francs on me. He took this money. Then they took my brother and the maid to kill them.

After the genocide I married a widower and told him everything that had happened to me. He seemed understanding, until I was diagnosed with the HIV virus. When I heard I had contracted HIV/AIDS I collapsed. My commitment to my children and the encouragement of my friends helped me to regain some strength.

I spent two whole months at home, doing nothing but waiting for death. I used to think that there was nothing left for me but to die. I lost my sanity, worrying about my children, who would be condemned to a life alone. I felt guilty that I had brought them into the world. I even wanted to commit suicide, and spoke to my older sister about my plans. She stopped me from carrying out my intentions. I continued talking about ending my life to friends, and they made me see reason.

My husband who is now dead, was also found to be HIV positive. I stayed with him throughout his illness and bore his relentless accusations.

He went mad. He didn't tell anybody, but he became a drunkard. Dissension invaded our home and we only ever said hurtful things to each other. It was total chaos. He said that I had infected him. One minute he'd be really angry towards me and the next he'd be apologising and telling me that it wasn't my fault, that I was raped, and that I didn't stand a chance of defending myself.

He told me that before he'd married me, he'd never had a partner, so it must have been me who infected him. We were no longer able to talk about our family problems in public. He often said that he regretted ever having survived the genocide, knowing that he was now to die of AIDS.



My husband's death was a warning of what I am waiting for. I believe I will die more of sorrow than of illness.

But my greatest concern is my children who are at the heart of the matter. They are fine, in that I have had them tested for HIV and the results came back negative. But I worry about their future when I die.

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