

Apolinaire / 44

Apolinaire Kageruka is a survivor of the Rwandan genocide...

[Apolinaire is sitting on a chair, talking straight to camera. He holds his son, who is c. 6 months old on his lap.]

I was a teacher in my area, in my commune. All school in our country was on holiday, Easter holiday. My uncle come, it was very early in the morning, knock on the door. He said, 'Apolinaire, wake up! Why are you sleeping? You are sleeping and our president has died.'

We start to hear in Kigali they start to kill Tutsis. Our parents had mentality that if they can go to the church they can survive. I say no, I can't go to the church, because I knew that they're going to find us in the church. I say, 'oh my God. Where can I go?'

As I told you, I was a teacher. One of my students, he was very, very clever, but from poor family. So I call his daddy; I pay money for his son. So in that time, I remember that parent. Maybe he could be good friend for me. I went to see him. I explain to him – that guy was Hutu anyway. I explain to him, 'look' – his name was Pascal – 'look, Pascal, the people want to kill me. Is it possible to have refuge, to hide in this house, in your house?' And he said, 'Apolinaire, Apolinaire, everything I can help, I will do for you.'

So, two hours after I left my house, the militia comes to find me. They try, one week, two weeks, to find, 'where is Apolinaire?' They didn't find my anywhere.

That house; can you imagine you bring another person in that small house, without a bed, without blanket? Think! Just sleeping on the floor. You don't have any food; you want some water. You can't go to find the water. You can't go to find the food. Think.... Imagine.

Because Pascal was a Hutu, he went outside to check how the situation is. When he come tonight he told me, 'I don't know where is your mother, I don't know where is your brother.' **Oh, my God. Can I live without my family? Or my family can... can live without me?**

After I think one month and a half, I start to hear some noise of the gun. I say this is RPF is coming. Then Pascal come. 'Quick,' he say, 'Apolinaire, please move. I don't know where you are going, but you have to leave this place because they know that you are here.' I leave the place; I went to hide in the bush. After two days the RPF comes.

My first thing I was trying to do is to find my family. They kill my big brother, my young brother, my sister, and my father and my mother. That is all my family. And around my family; my uncles, my cousins... lots, lots, I can't tell you how many. All of them finish.

I went to that church, our parish church where my father was telling me to go to hide. Can you imagine if you are expecting to see some bodies, like two or three, or four, and you see three thousand people died? Can you imagine? I was just out of my mind. **Am I still alive or I'm already died as these people I see in front of me?**

I tried to pray. I couldn't pray. I said, let me ask God. I say, how can you ask God, and you see three thousand people in the church died? In that situation I couldn't believe in God. I said, maybe God is not exist. How, three thousand people in the church? And that church is where I was praying every Sunday. So it took me like three or four days to realise that, to know that I'm Apolinaire and I'm still alive. Oh...

This is my second son. I give him the name Bernard, as my father. *[Pointing at the child on his knee.]* It's like, to keep in my mind how my dad was... love me. *[Weeps.]* Sorry. Ok. So, as I make another family I am trying to... to go back in that happiness I had before. That's why this son has the name as my dad. Bernard.

[Interviewer] Have you ever seen Pascal?

Yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah. He's my best friend. I give him my farm. I am here because of him. I'm survive – He help me to survive. Yeah. Even that son I was helping, he went to secondary school. Finished his university now. He's a man. We chat. He's a clever man.

[Interviewer] Does it make you feel proud?

[Apolinaire points at the interviewer, nods in agreement and smiles.] Thank you.