

Study Guide for *Our Lady of Kibeho*

By Immacule'e Ilibagiza

Chapter 1: My Faith was Born in Fatima

- On page 4 Immacule'e says, "In my world, praying and playing overlapped." Name a time when you experienced play and prayer overlapping or intersecting. What was that like? What was the inspiration for that experience?
- Six months prior to turning eleven Immacule'e began to question everything related to faith. How do you confront moments of doubt?
- Immacule'e's teacher and her stories of Fatima were a source of refreshment and rejuvenation for Immacule'e. What revitalizes your faith? What stories from our Catholic tradition reinvigorate you?

Chapter 2: Mary Arrives in Rwanda

- In the beginning of chapter two, Immacule'e describes the age-old custom of *Igitaramo*. Do you have anything that resembles *Igitaramo* in your family? How do you keep family stories and traditions alive?
- When Mary first appeared to Alphonsine Mumureke, she told Alphonsine that she wanted to be known as "Mother of the Word." Why do you think Mary chose this title for herself? What meaning does this title have for the people of Africa? For us in the United States?

Chapter 3: Mary is Accepted

- The visionaries, Alphonsine Mumureke, Anathalie Mukamazimpaka and Marie-Claire Mukangango were all students at Kibeho High School. Why do you think they were chosen to be the messengers of Mary? Do you think the fact that they were young school girls had something to do with a) their being messengers, b) the skepticism of the people at the time, c) the hope of the people? Explain

- Do you find the message shared by Alphonsine, Anathalie and Marie-Claire to be relevant for us today? Please ponder and share how their messages might be of value to us.

Chapter 4: The First Visionary-Alphonsine

- Alphonsine is described as a “simple, dirt-poor peasant girl.” She was not a gifted student, yet she studied hard. It was to her that the “Mother of the Word” first appeared. How was Alphonsine’s upbringing and background a spring-board for her encounter with the Virgin?
- What actions did Alphonsine embrace to nurture her relationship with the “Mother of the Word”?
- Pages 36 and 37 describe one of Alphonsine’s visions and how removed she was from what was happening around her. Have you ever been so engaged in prayer that you lost track of other things around you including time? What did that feel like to you? Identify 5 adjectives that describe that experience.

Chapter 5: The Second Visionary-Anathalie

- Anathalie was known to be a very pious student from a large, devout Catholic family. She prayed and read her Bible every day. On page 49 Mary gives Anathalie her mission: “...lead those lost souls back from darkness.” Mary goes on to tell Anathalie that she will suffer because the world is bad.

What acts of “suffering” do you take upon yourself in the name of God? What do you “offer up” for the salvation of others? How are these actions tied to the life, death and resurrection of Jesus?

Chapter 6: And Then There Were Three: Marie-Claire

- Marie-Claire was at first a skeptic and often ridiculed Alphonsine and Anathalie, and yet she too was chosen to be a messenger for the “Mother of the Word.”

How is Marie-Claire like St. Paul? How is she like you? Have there been times in your life when you doubted God, faith, or religion only to have blessings come to you?

Chapter 7: My Father's Pilgrimage

- While on pilgrimage to Kibeho Immacule'e's father and the others spent many hours together sharing songs and prayers and stories of their faith.

When have you had an experience of sharing faith with others? What was that like? What were the fruits or gifts of that sharing?

Chapter 8: Dad Sees the Visionaries

- The visionaries each had a message for the pilgrims ; Alphonsine encouraged them to sing and pray; Marie-Claire encouraged repentance and Anathalie reminded them all that suffering and humility are part of the Christian life.

What saints from our Catholic tradition do these visionaries remind you of? Who in your personal life has shared with you these same messages?

Chapter 9: Joy in the Land and Mary's Seven Sorrows

- In chapter nine Immacule'e introduces the reader to the Seven Sorrows Rosary. The Seven Sorrows touch on the very human heart of a mother observing the life of her son. Have you ever prayed these Sorrows? How are these 'Sorrows' similar or different from sorrows you have experienced in life? What "sorrows" in your own life would you add to this list? What is the gift that comes from praying the Sorrows?

Chapter 10: Jesus' Odd Choices of Visionaries

- In chapter ten Immacule'e tells us of Segatashya and Vestine, two other visionaries who have encounters with Jesus (Segatashya) and Mary (Vestine). Both of them are sent on a "mission of love."

When have you engaged in a "mission of love?" What actions were required of you? Did you engage in any activity because of this mission that you would not have freely chosen prior to the mission?

Chapter 11: Three More Visionaries

- Three more visionaries rose up in the 1980's: Agnes, Stephanie and Valentine. These three young women shared a message of the Cross, of sanctity of the human body and the need for prayer in the lives of all people. They were all pretty regular people; how are their stories reflected in your own? How is prayer a part of your daily routine? What does the Cross of Christ say to you?

Chapter 12: Miracles in the Sky

- When have you felt the love of the Blessed Mother? What was/is that like for you?
- What miracles has the love of the Blessed Mother and Jesus brought into your life?

Chapter 13: The Mystical Journeys

- How do the visionaries experiences of heaven relate to your own wonderings about heaven? How are they the same? How are they different?

Chapter 14: Mary's Tears in a River of Blood

- Chapter fourteen is a bit of a foreshadowing of what would come to pass in Rwanda in the era of the genocide. What feelings flow through you as you read this chapter? How do you describe the reaction of the visionaries? Of the people? Would you react similarly or differently?

Chapter 15: Mary, Above Kibeho and Throughout History

- Many people wanted to travel to Kibeho, but were unable to for a variety of reasons. Valerie, a classmate of Immacule'e's shared with Immacule'e an announcement from the Blessed Mother through the visionary Valentine about a special blessing for the "pilgrims of the heart."

Have you ever been a "pilgrim of the heart," unable to travel to a holy site, but not being able to do so? Is there someplace you would want to visit but cannot? Where? Why? What would you hope to experience?

Chapter 16: Mary, Through Happiness, Heartache, and Horror

- The visionaries and their messages were and are an important part of the history of the people who knew first hand and who are still recovering from the genocide in Rwanda.

How has devotion to Mary assisted the recovery of the Rwandan people? What grace has been given to them? What grace has been given to you when you have turned to the Blessed Mother in times of trial?

Epilogue: The New Jerusalem

- How are you called to be a prophet—to speak the Word of God in the place where you live? Ponder this deeply.