



# Bridie's Blethers



September 2024

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## War – Only The Innocent Suffer



[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Holy\\_Family\\_Church\\_in\\_Gaza.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Holy_Family_Church_in_Gaza.jpg)

War does not discriminate between the perpetrators and the innocent. Just like the war between Ukraine and Russia, war in the middle east between Israel and Gaza continues with apparent disregard to innocent people, women and children alike.

According to a recent BBC report, more than 40,000 Palestinian people have died as a result of the Gaza conflict – 1.7% of the population.

Recently, a rocket attack targeted a school in the Holy Family parish in Gaza. The parish priest, Fr. Gabriel, who also visited Glasgow earlier this year to highlight the plight of the people suffering in the

region, said the school was a place of refuge for people who had been affected by the war.

You may remember, the Holy Family Parish in Gaza was also the site of a similar reported conflict last year.

When previously visiting the Holy Land, the then Bishop Nolan of the Diocese Galloway, called upon UK, EU, and North American governments to insist on the application of international law in Israel and Palestine. Calling for prayers and more political pressure, now Archbishop Nolan said:

“There is no safe place in Gaza for the civilian population, not even on Church premises. I would urge everyone to pray fervently for an end to this conflict.

“Only the cessation of hostilities and the release of all hostages will bring respite to the suffering peoples of the Holy Land and restore the opportunity to work for a just peace.”

A local church spokesperson for the Holy Family parish said:

“The Latin Patriarchate condemns in the strongest terms the targeting of civilians or any belligerent actions that fall short of ensuring that civilians remain outside the combat scene.

“We don't have accurate numbers because our own parish priest and members of the community could not get to the location, because there's intensive fighting around the parish. It's too dangerous for anyone to actually leave.”

Scotland's Bishops' Justice and Peace Commission, said: “We are horrified to hear that the Israeli army have bombed the Holy Family School in Gaza, resulting in civilian casualties. The school is the property of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem and part of the compound area of the Holy Family Parish where Fr Gabriel who visited us in April is the parish priest and has been a place of refuge for civilians since the start of the war.

“We condemn in the strongest possible terms the targeting of civilians and reissue the call for a permanent ceasefire now.” .....We're sure this reflects the thoughts of St. Bride's parish too.

## My Home – A Holy Place

...Fr. Duncan



One of the most important and most successful ways to win hearts for Christ, throughout Church history, was living the faith and giving witness to the faith in and from our own homes.

The early Christians were very aware that their own home was a holy place, because God was present and active in their lives and experiences. If we want a just and healthy society, we need to focus more on our families, so that every member of our family decides for Christ and his Gospel by their own choice. The key to this was always the “Domestic Church” or the “Church in miniature”. We could compare the Church to a mighty “ocean” and every Christian home, where faith is lived, becomes a “living stream” flowing into that ocean.

Could it be that the answer to the secularisation of our times is staring us in the face - the answer lies in the

Domestic Church as a means to renew the Church for today’s challenges.

As a church today we are faced with new difficulties and challenges: The former Archbishop of Glasgow, Philip Tartaglia, who unexpectedly died on 13th January 2021, said “I could see myself going to jail possibly at some point over the next 15 years...if I speak out... I am deeply concerned that today, defending the traditional meaning of marriage is almost considered ‘hate speech’ and branded intolerant,” he said. In 2010 Cardinal George, Archbishop of Chicago, said that, given the hostile direction of the US government and society in general, “I expect to die in bed, my successor will die in prison and his successor will die a martyr in the public square. His successor will pick up the shards of a ruined society and slowly help rebuild civilisation, as the Church has done so often in human history.” Society today can close churches, or silence the voice of Christian opposition in public, and even arrest ordinary people for giving witness to their faith at work or sack them, but they will find it much more difficult to close down everyone’s home. Where will the life and faith of the Church thrive and flourish?

The importance of the home in the growth of faith is well recorded in the New Testament. A few examples: Where did Peter and the apostles stay on their journeys? Jesus told them “Wherever you enter a house, stay there until you leave from there” [Mark 6:10]. Paul in his Letter to the Romans says, “Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my co-workers in Christ Jesus, who risked their necks for my life... greet also the church at their house” [Romans 16: 3-5]. Again he writes to the Church in Corinth, “The churches of Asia send you greetings. Aquila and Priscilla together with the church at their house send greetings in the Lord.” [Corinthians 16: 19] Christian homes were the crucial places where the faith was passed on and lived and where the life of the Church was celebrated.

The understanding of what the Domestic Church is can be found in many key Documents of the Church today, including the Second Vatican Council. The Council called every family “the domestic church” (Lumen Gentium #11), where much of the life of the Church takes place. Pope John Paul II said: The great task of Christians today is to “form the family as a ‘domestic church’, a church in the home as it were, where God is honoured, his law is respected, prayer is a normal event, virtue is transmitted by word and example, and everyone shares the hopes, the problems and sufferings of everyone else. All this is not to advocate a return to some outdated style of living: It is to return to the roots of human development and human happiness!” In the Catechism of the Catholic Church we read that the domestic church is where the father of the family, the mother and the children exercise the priesthood of the baptised. It is the first school of Christian life and a school for human enrichment where all members of the family learn endurance and the joy of work, fraternal love, and generous forgiveness. In *Familiaris Consortio*, John Paul II wrote that families who live in a domestic church should be able to radiate joy, warmth, a welcoming spirit and be proclaimers of the Gospel by their very being. In this way they fulfil their

family apostolate also to non-Christians and non-believers. On 7th February 2007, Pope Benedict XVI stated: "Every home is called to become a "domestic church" in which family life is completely centred on the lordship of Christ and the love of husband and wife mirrors the mystery of Christ's love for the Church, his bride." And in *Evangelii Gaudium*, Pope Francis called on all Christian families, by the grace of the sacrament of matrimony, to always be the principal agents of the family apostolate, above all through their joy-filled witness as domestic churches. It is so important that people experience the Gospel of the family as a joy that fills hearts and lives, because in Christ we have been set free from sin, sorrow, inner emptiness and loneliness (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 1).

Basically, all these encouragements and inspiration say the same thing and bring the same urgent message: Every Christian home should be a place where the love of husband and wife mirrors the mystery of Christ's love for his Church; where parents build each other up, and stand in reverence before each other; where the family exercises the priesthood of Baptism with a family life centred on the Lordship of Christ; where they learn endurance, joy, fraternal love and a generous forgiveness; where the family proclaims the Gospel by example and in words; where every family radiates warmth and a welcoming spirit to all; where every member of the family is encouraged to live a life under the banner of self-giving and a life of solidarity. When these qualities are present in a family, the domestic church is alive and well and the Church will be alive and well.

The Bishops from the USA in the Website, offer some important "tools" for the building of a Domestic Church in every home: Begin praying as a family and reading from Scripture; pray a Family Rosary; have a crucifix in a prominent place in the home, and in every bedroom; make the Sacraments a regular celebration – when we are able, take the whole family to Confession and Mass; begin family traditions based on the seasons celebrated in the liturgical calendar; remind the children that they are loved by God and have been given gifts to serve others; talk freely about the presence of God in the joys and sorrows of your life; participate in the lay ministries and activities of your parish community; allow the children to witness you in private prayer and encourage the children to pray daily on their own, to listen for God's call, and if heard, to respond.

Statistics tells us that there are approximately 1.3 billion Catholics in the world today. Could you imagine the impact we would all have on the world and society, if every home was a true Domestic Church - living the faith and giving witness to the faith in conviction, truth and love? Could it be that our own homes hold the key for the renewal of the Church today and for the fulfilment of our Christian mission? Let's be confident in what the Good Lord is calling us to do - every home a holy place. As Pope Francis tells us: "Jesus Christ loves you; he gave his life to save you; and now he is living at your side every day to enlighten, strengthen and free you" [*Evangelii Gaudium*, §164]. And "Families are the domestic Church, where Jesus grows; he grows in the love of spouses, he grows in the lives of children" [37th National Convocation of the "Renewal of the Spirit" in Rome].

There is a well-known story that Pope St. John XXIII would turn in at night saying, "It's your Church, Lord, I'm going to bed." That was how the Good Pope John would deal with the stress of being shouldered with the concerns and worries of the huge, entire world. Everyone of us has our own worries, even if they aren't as many or as diverse as those a Pope has to confront. But what we mustn't forget is that, truly, these children and this family are more God's than our own. He is more "worried" than we could ever be for them, and infinitely better able to take care of them and resolve any troubles or difficulties. So every night, we could also say with confidence: "It's your Domestic Church, Lord, I'm going to bed!"

Let us pray that our families and households, our Domestic Churches, are open to the transforming love of God, and that they can be a witness of God's mercy to each other and the world.

## Good Fruit, Bad Fruit (Catholic Daily Reflection)



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*“Do people pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? Just so, every good tree bears good fruit, and a rotten tree bears bad fruit.” – Matthew 7:16-17*

“So by their fruits you will know them.” This is how the Gospel passage for 26<sup>th</sup> June 2024 concludes. It offers us an exceptionally practical way by which you can discern the working of God in your own life and in the life of others.

When you look at your own life, what good fruit, born for the upbuilding of the Kingdom of God, do you see? Some people may find little to no fruit born, either for good or bad. Such complacency is, in and of itself, bad fruit.

Other people may see an abundance of fruit, thus producing many consequences in this world. They influence the lives of many, and their public actions make a true difference. Sometimes for good...and other times for evil.

When discerning the actions of God in our world, we must first be very objective. The evil one is always very deceptive and regularly presents his bad fruit as good. For example, the legalization of abortion is often presented by many within our world as a “right to choose” or a “health service.” But the intentional death of any unborn child is clearly “bad fruit” from a “rotten tree.” There are even many so-called “humanitarian groups” or very wealthy “philanthropists” who present their work as “good fruit,” when it is anything but good. And on the contrary, there are many who work hard to bring forth a greater respect for life from the moment of conception to natural death, or strive to uphold the sacredness of marriage as God designed it, or work to promote the freedom to worship in accord with the will of God, but are labeled by the secular world as prejudiced, bigoted, fearmongers and even hateful. But their work, done very sacrificially, truly does bear good fruit for the Kingdom of God.

How about your own life? When you examine your actions and the fruit born of those actions, from where does that fruit originate? Does it come from a false sense of compassion, a misguided “charity,” and a fear of being criticized for standing for the truth? Or does it come from a deep love of God, an awareness of the truth God has revealed to us, and through a courageous proclamation of the pure Gospel?

Good fruit, born from the heart of the Father in Heaven, will always mirror the truths of our faith. A false sense of compassion, false accusations, persecutions and the like will flow from the rotten trees in our world. We must work diligently to be those good trees that bear the good fruit coming from God. This requires a radical commitment to do what is right in the face of the evil all around us.

Reflect, today, upon these images Jesus presents. Do you see clearly both the good and bad fruit around you? Is your life helping to foster the lies of the evil one or the truth and love of God? Look at the fruit your life bears, as well as the fruit within our world, in an objective way, comparing it to the clear and unambiguous teachings of Jesus. Seek out that good fruit with all your heart and do all you can to bring it forth, no matter the cost, and you will not only save your soul, you will also help feed others with the good fruit of Heaven.

*Prayer: My Lord of all truthfulness, You and You alone define the good and evil in our world. Your truth reveals the good fruit that is born to nourish the growth of Your glorious Kingdom. Give me courage and clarity of mind and heart so that I may continually do all that You call me to do so as to bring the good fruit of the Kingdom to all in need. Jesus, I trust in You.*

.....Source: [Good Fruit—Bad Fruit - Catholic Daily Reflections \(catholic-daily-reflections.com\)](http://catholic-daily-reflections.com)

## Modern Day Peter And Paul



## ...From Our Largs Correspondent

The fact that Peter and Paul share the same Feast Day every year is a bit misleading. It rather gives the impression that they were friends and worked together. But this just isn't true. As individuals they had nothing in common except their Jewishness. Paul was a Pharisee from Jerusalem in the South, an educated man and part of the religious establishment there. Peter was an uneducated man from Galilee in the North. And so they were as far apart in status and position as a smart-suited lawyer in London today and a poor fisherman in Peterhead or Arbroath. Nor is there any evidence that they spent a lot of time together. They met twice in Jerusalem and once in Antioch. People speculate that they might have met again towards the end of their lives in Rome. But it's only speculation. There's no mention of this anywhere in the New Testament. So what are we to make of the relationship between these two towering figures of the early Church and what is its significance for us today? Well, the clue is in the meeting they had in Antioch

which we read about in the Letter to the Galatians.

The background to this event is the first great crisis faced by the early Church; the dispute about the status of new gentile converts and their relationship with Judaism. Some insisted that the Gentiles be circumcised and become Jews. Others, like Paul, disagreed. The matter was settled in favour of the liberals or reformers at a meeting around the year 49AD we rather misleadingly call 'The Council of Jerusalem', a meeting which basically decided that the Gentiles did not have to become Jews. Sometime after that, however, maybe months, maybe a year or so later, an important incident happened in Antioch in southern Turkey, known today as Antakya.

There is no time nor need to go into the details of this event Suffice it to say that, having reached the decision they had in Jerusalem, Peter, under pressure from traditionalists, reneged on it in Antioch. Paul went mental and publicly confronted Peter. We only have Paul's version of the story, of course, but we know there was a serious row. And as he describes this in Galatians Paul tells us something else which is fundamental to understanding today's Feast. As a result of what had happened, it was agreed among themselves that Peter would go to the Jews and Paul to the Gentiles, an arrangement which brings the whole story right up to date. What I am suggesting is that the tension which existed in the early Church still exists today. That the 'Jews and Gentiles' of the first century still exist in the Church now.

So who are they? Who are the modern day equivalents of those two groups? Well, the Jews in the current situation are most of us here. We are the ones who have been around for years. Many of us are cradle Catholics who have known a particular way of being the Church all our lives. Like the Jews of Jesus' time, we are steeped in a particular way of thinking. We have our traditional ways of doing things; our traditional devotions and ways of praying; our traditional presumptions about so many things, all of which are hard-wired into us. And, just like the Jews in Peter and Paul's day, we have an in-built resistance to change.

On the other hand, we have the modern-day Gentiles, among whom are young people, perhaps your children and grandchildren, who are conspicuously absent from our Churches. The things that we have known all our lives and which have sustained us over the years, mean nothing to them. They make no sense. And so they have walked away. But the real Gentiles today are not these young people, important as they are. They are the millions of people out there in the modern world who know nothing of God, the people Jesus was thinking of when he sent his disciples out into the world to teach all nations. And they must always be the Church's priority.

The Church exists, not for its members, us, but for the world, a truth which has huge implications for those of us who, like the Jews 2000 years ago, have been around for a long time.

Sometimes stuck in our ways, we need help. We need help to understand that things in the Church have changed many times over the centuries. We need to understand, for example, that many of the things we grew up with and thought were what it meant to be a Catholic, dated from no further back than the 19th century. Many are even more recent than that. So they are not essential. We don't need to hang on to them.

Jesus tells us in the Gospels that 'if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out. If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off.' But could we not say that anything we do or say or think which makes it more difficult for the Gentiles of the 21st century to come to faith in God, then, provided it is not of the essence of our faith but something that belonged to its own time, we should, as the early Church did at that meeting in Jerusalem, pluck it out or cut it off. If we are to reach your grandchildren and great grandchildren let alone the millions beyond them, then we cannot just keep saying the same things and expect a different outcome. We need to learn a new language. We need to find ways of celebrating and expressing our faith which make it accessible to people who live in a very different world from the one we were born into. We need to let go of many things, not because they were bad – many were very good – but because their time has passed.

And that requires wisdom, generosity of heart, courage, vision and a willingness to put the needs of future generations before our own. Peter and Paul both did this and we are the beneficiaries. But it cost them. Peter was crucified upside-down and Paul had his head cut off. With a bit of luck the cost for us will not be quite as high.

## Happy 103<sup>rd</sup> Birthday Mary Moran

St. Bride's parishioner Maragret McCallum has an amazing mum who has just celebrated her 103<sup>rd</sup> birthday. An amazing lady. Happy Birthday Mary!



Mary with her Great Grandson, Elliot Maxmimillion McCallum. Age difference of 102 years!



## St. Bride's Friends and Family Fun Day

Everyone had an enjoyable and happy day at St. Bride's Friends & Family Fun Day on Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> August. Apart from a brief light shower, we were blessed with a dry day.

A very big THANK YOU to everyone who donated and helped organise the day. A special THANK YOU to our main organiser, Jo Gibson. Here are some pictures from the happy day....







## Congratulations Fr. Gerry, 50 Years Of Holy Priesthood



Congratulations to Fr. Gerry Hammill who has celebrated 50 years in the priesthood. A celebratory get-together was held in St. Bride's hall after Sunday Mass. All of us want to thank Fr. Gerry for his wonderful service in the priesthood across continents over 50 years and wish him many more. We are blessed to have Fr. Gerry spend his retirement at St. Bride's.

Here are a few pictures of the celebration and a copy of the speech he made at a celebration in Glasgow which gives a brief insight to his wonderful service as a priest.

"I thought I would tell a few stories from my 50 years of priesthood, based on the virtues of faith, hope and charity.

### **The first:**

One day, in my parish in Sarawak, I was asked by a Legion of Mary member who was a cleaner in the hospital, if I would baptise a young boy, whose parents were catechumens (those preparing for Baptism). Both of us went over and, after his mother's permission, I baptised the boy, whose head was swathed in bandages. I then went back to the Parish house and didn't really think any more about it, although the next time I was visiting the hospital, some of the nurses gave me an odd look.



At the next meeting of the Legion of Mary, the lady who worked in the hospital told me the whole story. She had been cleaning the ward, when the doctor was doing his rounds and he told the boy's mother that she should contact her "witch doctor", as he couldn't do any more for her son. The Legionary said that, as she was preparing to become a Catholic, she should contact the priest. She replied that she didn't know the priest(me), as her home was about 100 miles away. Could the Legionary ask me?

The morning after the Baptism, the doctor was making his rounds again and told the mother she could take the boy home, as there was nothing wrong with him any longer.

Testament to the faith of the parents.

### **The second:**

At the end of the Vietnam War, many Vietnamese took to boats to escape. One such group landed in my parish when their boat beached there. They were a group of about 20 of all ages from elderly to a baby. The army rounded them up and put them in the local Red Crescent hut. The army then contacted myself, telling me that the group had nothing but the clothes they were wearing. I collected some food and clothing and went to visit them. They were

grateful for whatever I could provide them with but, having learned I was a priest, all they really wanted from me was for me to celebrate Mass for them.

That was possibly the most memorable Mass I have celebrated. You have to imagine a run-down hut with a rickety table as the only furniture. It became the altar. In a corner, propped up against the wall was a statue of Our Lady. I celebrated Mass in English and they sang in Vietnamese. Some were in tears and I was on the verge of tears more than once myself.

A couple of the older men spoke some French, a smattering of which I had learned in Lochwinnoch. I understood enough to understand that they were the only survivors of their village. Everyone else, including their priest had been killed. Their Church had been burned down and all they managed to save was the damaged statue of Our Lady (and when they reached the shore, the 4 youngest men had to get off first and carry the statue to the beach, before carrying anyone else).

They had embarked on that journey, with the hope of a safer future.



### **The third:**

A few years ago, I offered to spend the summer in America making Mission Appeals. It would have meant going around parishes there raising funds for missions overseas. Instead, much to my surprise, when I got there, the Superior told me I was needed as a temporary chaplain for Jacobi hospital in the South Bronx of New York. (At the time, Paul Newman was making a film about a neighbouring police station called Fort Apache, the Bronx.) I was to take the place of 2 chaplains, who took it in turn to go for

a month's holiday. It was definitely the busiest 2 months I have ever lived. The work involved 48 hours on and 48 hours off. You had a wee room with a bed in the hospital for when you were on call- and you were called night and day.

The hospital was huge (about 4 or 5 times the Royal Infirmary in Glasgow) and I would walk along the corridors in the evening and regularly people would stop me and ask if I could attend their family member who was a patient. One particular evening, a man asked me if I would visit his son and as we were walking a beautiful young woman approached us and the man introduced us. She was his son's wife. We shook hands and I was aware that her hands were warm. She then took over taking me to visit her husband. To make conversation, I asked what was wrong with him. "Oh, Father, he has AIDS", says she, almost matter-of-factly. (This was when AIDS had just begun to be recognised.)

We entered the room and her husband cut a haggard figure. He looked much older than his father. His wife immediately sat down on the bed and cradled his head in her hands. That is how she spent her day.

This occurred in the August. I learned later that they had been married the previous December and he had been diagnosed with AIDS in the February.

Although she must have been terrified, she never showed it, nor anger nor hurt. Only love, which is the true meaning of charity.

These stories, for me, sum up a priest's life. We are privileged to be with God's people when we are needed most."

..... Fr. Gerry

## Bridie's Nuggets



"A Christian is: a mind through which Christ thinks, a heart through which Christ loves, a voice through which Christ speaks, and a hand through which Christ helps."

...St. Augustine

"it will be a great day when our schools get all the money they need and the air force has to hold a bake sale to buy a bomber."

...Women's International League for Peace and Freedom

"Faith doesn't mean that you don't have doubts... [you] still experience the same greed, resentment, lust, and anger that everyone else experienced... the lines between sinner and saved [are] more fluid; the sins of those who come to church are not so different from the sins of those who don't... You [need] to come to church precisely because you [are] of this world, not apart from it; rich, poor, sinner, saved you [need] to embrace Christ precisely because you had sins to wash away... that religious commitment did not require me to suspend critical thinking, disengage from the battle for economic and social justice, or otherwise retreat from the world...."

...Barack Obama



"The number of followers you have doesn't make you better than anyone else. Hitler had millions, Jesus had 12."

...Unknown

## Just for a laugh.....Johnny's Dust

After church, Johnny tells his parents he has to go and talk to the minister right away. They agree, and the pastor greets the family.

"Pastor," Johnny says, "I heard you say today that our bodies came from the dust."

"That's right, Johnny, I did," he says.

"And I heard you say that when we die, our bodies go back to dust."

"Yes, I'm glad you were listening," the pastor replies. "Why do you ask?"

"Well you better come over to our house right away and look under my bed, 'cause there's someone either comin' or goin'!"

## And Another.....

In his beautiful book, "I Shall Not Want," Robert Ketchum tells of a Sunday School teacher who asked her group of children if anyone could quote the entire 23rd Psalm. A golden-haired, four-and-a-half-year-old girl was among those who raised their hands.

A bit sceptical, the teacher asked if she could really quote the entire psalm.

The little girl came to the front of the room, faced the class, made a perky little bow, and said, "The Lord is my shepherd, that's all I want."

She bowed again and went and sat down.

That may well be the greatest interpretation of the 23rd Psalm ever heard.



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**ADAM & EVE**  
**THE FIRST PEOPLE TO NOT**  
**READ THE APPLE TERMS &**  
**CONDITIONS**

Please write to us with your thoughts! We hope you have enjoyed this edition of Bridie's Blethers. For future editions your parish needs **YOU!** Please provide any feedback (good or bad) and most importantly topics and articles to include in the next edition by emailing [westkilbride@gallowaydiocese.org](mailto:westkilbride@gallowaydiocese.org). Alternatively, speak to or email one of the editorial team: [Petermcluskie60@icloud.com](mailto:Petermcluskie60@icloud.com); [joe.mcaleavy1804@yahoo.com](mailto:joe.mcaleavy1804@yahoo.com); [howiephyllis@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:howiephyllis@yahoo.co.uk);

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**Your  
Parish  
Needs  
You**