

An Ordinary Life in Wartime

A Filipina wife and mother describes her situation in Israel.

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My family's big move to Jerusalem suffered God's timing indeed. It took almost five years of planning, saving, and countless bureaucratic and circumstantial delays before we finally arrived in Israel to stay for good. Four days later, with the jetlag barely shaken off our bodies, we woke up to air raid sirens and the

booming explosions of rockets above the city. Israel was at war.

Like most everyone else in the country that day, we were in and out of our bomb shelter all morning. The Israeli government estimates around 2,200 rockets were fired by Hamas into Israel that day. More than two months later as I write this, the nation is still at war while it yet mourns its losses and prays for the return of its stolen family members. More than 9,000 rockets have been launched at Israeli civilians. About 1,200 were killed, and 240 including women and children, were taken captive to Gaza. Today, less than half of that number have been returned to their remaining family members, and at least one young child came home as an orphan.

I remember the first few weeks of the war to be chaotic. Even though I didn't lose anyone, like everybody I

felt real grief and fear as the government and news agencies revealed the unthinkable evil committed against entire families, children, youth, and foreign workers in the south of Israel. There was a lot of confusion as our own families living abroad urged us to leave the country in the fog of panic. For days we felt our commitment to our adopted home waver.

Jerusalem has remained relatively quiet and peaceful compared to the conflict zones in the South and North, but the tension was palpable in the streets at the start of war. Stores were shuttered and the typically noisy and colorful streets of Jerusalem were empty.

One day as I was walking to my doctor's appointment, the air raid siren went off and I watched as two intercepting rockets flew overhead and met Hamas rockets above the

city. The explosions rattled within me — that's how close the rockets were.

I could not concentrate, not even to pray. My daily routine was completely overthrown by the noise of wartime and the compulsion to read every bit of news on the subject. I had never been anywhere near a conflict zone before, let alone live in a country in all-out war. How is a Christian to navigate all this?

“Domine, ut videam!” (Lord, that I may see)

“Many who would willingly let themselves be nailed to a Cross before the astonished gaze of a thousand onlookers cannot bear with a Christian spirit the pinpricks of each day! Think, then, which is the more heroic.” (The Way, 204)

God called many to be heroes in this ongoing war. There are countless heartbreakng stories of fathers,

mothers, sons and daughters laying down their lives to protect their loved ones. There were brave men and women, even mothers, who deliberately drove into the conflict zones to search and rescue both loved ones and strangers. Before the day ended on October 7, reservists were reporting for duty before they were even called up, willingly saying goodbye to their loved ones. Day by day Israel is witnessing heroism from their soldiers, their police, and their civilian neighbors.

But God has called me to be “heroic” in this time of war in unexpected places: in parts of my marriage that continue to require my patience and meekness; in my motherhood which demands all of me all the time; in old and new relationships where He has asked me to accompany someone in friendship; in the “pinpricks” of daily life that require my humble acceptance and trust. My adopted

country was at war, yes, but my marriage continued to require my growth in tenderness and trust as usual; my child needed his mama; and my home needed tending by its homemaker.

In my search to do something extraordinary during extraordinary times, I had “fallen asleep” to the ordinary, like the apostles in the agony of Our Lord. He wanted me to remain watchful and to pray, more than ever. And it was precisely in these places that my soul was assaulted with privation and distraction. The war rages loudly and demands my constant attention, but it’s actually my prayer life that needs focus; its maintenance vital to the survival of my faith in these evil times.

I asked God to help me see His will. I found the answer to be the same as it ever was. I’m no soldier so it’s not my

place to fight. I'm no policy-maker so there's no decisions for me to make. Nor am I a spokesperson to be engaging people online who may be well-intentioned but poorly educated on the complexities of this decades-long conflict now erupted to full-scale war. Wartime or peacetime, my goal had not changed: sanctification in daily life and seeking God's will. And perhaps most obvious of all: to pray, pray, pray. To do penance for the violence done against the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of our Mother.

One of my pastors here in Jerusalem said "We are not called to save the whole world. We are called to serve those people God put in our lives." Yes, in wartime there is work to be done and help to be offered. Charity in action is needed. Since the start of war, my husband and I have done our small part in helping volunteer

efforts for refugees and the Israeli Defence Forces.

Another good pastor of mine (a Catholic usually has plenty in the Holy Land) advises me, “Use this time. This is valuable time. Unite your sorrows to Jesus, and ask Him to purify your heart and purify others.”

The supernatural outlook St Josemaria urges us to keep helps me see the hard times for what they could be: a window into the agony and passion of Jesus, and an opportunity to accompany Him and grow closer to Him. The suffering that comes my way can be transformed into an offering united to Jesus’ own sacrifice — a fervent prayer for forgiveness and redemption for all souls.

And in my fervent hope in Jesus and His redemption, I pray He already has in His embrace those whose lives

were violently and unjustly taken away.

In these extraordinary times, my ordinary life has never been more crucial. In the smallness of my life and in the meekness of my prayers I have my Christian vocation, and with God's help I hope to make it, as St Paul says "a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing" to Him.

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