



Marcin Mazur

The Archbishop of Canterbury met and prayed with Gaza's only Catholic parish priest, Father Gabriel Romanelli, at Lambeth Palace yesterday.

Fr Romanelli is the Roman Catholic parish priest of the Church of the Holy Family in Gaza City. He was in Bethlehem buying medicine when Hamas attacked Israel on 7th October, and has not been able to return to Gaza since the war broke out.

The Archbishop and Fr Romanelli, with Canon Mark Madden from the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Liverpool, met privately before joining the Archbishop at Evening Prayer in the Lambeth Palace Crypt Chapel. During the service, the Archbishop anointed Fr Romanelli with Chrism oil, and Fr Romanelli gave the blessing at the end of the service.

Archbishop Justin Welby said: "It was a privilege to welcome Father Gabriel Romanelli to Lambeth Palace, and to pray with him for peace and justice in the Holy Land. Since Hamas' attack on 7th October, Fr Romanelli has been unable to return to his parish and parishioners at the Church of the Holy Family in Gaza. In that time, they have endured more than six months of Israeli bombardment, with up to 600 displaced people currently sheltering in the parish.

"In following Jesus Christ's teaching to serve and feed all people without distinction, the church is a beacon in the region. Its ministry looks after the poor, the sick, young people with special needs and elderly people in need of care. This work has been made immeasurably harder by a war that has decimated infrastructure essential to human survival. Meanwhile the scarcity of humanitarian access to and within the Strip continues to prevent aid workers from distributing life-saving supplies.



Marcin Mazur

"As I have said before and repeat again: international humanitarian law is resolutely clear that all parties to a conflict must allow and facilitate the rapid and unimpeded passage of humanitarian relief for civilians in need. This is especially true for Israel as the Occupying Power.

"I continue to pray and call for an immediate ceasefire, for the release of hostages, and for unimpeded aid to reach the people of Gaza. I pray that God watches over all those in Gaza, that Christians living there in unimaginable circumstances are kept safe, and that Fr Romanelli is allowed to return to continue his church's important work."

The Church of the Holy Family is the only Catholic church in the Gaza Strip. It runs three schools for children of all faiths as part of its ecumenical ministry, and has more than ten ambulances, as well as two care homes for disabled children and adults.

2 min read

Source URL: <https://www.archbishopofcanterbury.org/news/news-and-statements/archbishop-canterbury-meets-catholic-priest-gaza>