

I have been praying for Arab Christians for a long time so it is a joy to be with you today.

Let's have a look at these words.

They were first written by Paul to the Christians in Ephesus.

The Christians there were a diverse group of people, made up of Jews and Gentiles.

Paul is urging them to remain unified, to bear with one another in love.

That is what it means to live a life worthy of the calling.

How will this diverse group of believers know that they are living a life worthy of Jesus?

They will know it when they are humble, gentle and patient with each other.

They will be living a life worthy of Jesus when they are unified despite their diversity.

Paul urges them to be "bearing with one another".

When one of them has trouble they are to be gentle and bear with that person in love.

When they suffer because of another person in the church they are to be patient, humble and bear with that person.

Why are Christians able to do that?

Because as followers of Jesus we live with the same Holy Spirit That makes us all one.

One Spiritual body, though we have different backgrounds we all have the same faith.

Today we are praying for our Palestinian brothers and sisters.

The majority, live outside of Palestine and Israel.

56% live in the Lebanon, Jordan, Latin America, US, Canada and Australia.

When we are praying for Palestinian Christians we are praying for them all around the world.

Only 1% 1000 of all Palestinian Christians used to live in Gaza. Where are they now? Not at home and not at church. They are the ones in acute need of our prayers now.

20*the number who used to live in Gaza live in Melbourne and Sydney alone. 20 000

They would be related somehow to someone back in the Middle East.

They too need our prayers.

The women who prepared this material live on the West Bank of the Jordan River.

Our family got to go there and visit several churches where Palestinian Christians worship.

This the entrance of a large Palestinian church in Bethlehem. Appropriately named The Church of the Nativity.

You can see to get in and out through the doorway you have to bend right down.

Can you also see an older arched doorway. It has been barricaded up with a thick rock wall because this church has been attacked many times. It's thick walls have protected Christians who gathered for protection inside its walls from attack.



The Palestinian Christians are the marginalised minority people group in Palestinian and Israel. They suffer from both Israeli and Muslim authorities in the areas they live. They experience the worst of the economic, social and health problems of the region. Palestinian Christians have been robbed of their land and rights by both Muslim and Jewish people. Which is why over half of them no longer live there anymore.

Palestinian Christians know that they are part of an ancient church.

They have strong links with the first Christians.

They are linked through their land, DNA and culture.

They have survived the millenniums of injustice, persecution and division.

Numerically the numbers of Palestinian Christians in the Holy Lands is rapidly declining and the women who are still there are asking us to pray.

We pray for justice for Palestinian Christians. Justice from both the Muslims or Jewish authorities which control the lands where they live.

We pray for political peace and stability.

We pray for religious freedom in Gaza and the West Bank.

We pray for an end to Sharia law that they live under

We pray that they will be able to bear with one another in love.

We pray that they will know peace in their churches.

We also pray for families. The fear that families live with is huge.

Every day waiting for your husband, son or daughter to get back home through the overcrowded lines at the border crossings.

Not knowing if your brothers and sisters will get caught up in the latest civil unrest or police lockdown.

Will we bear their burdens? Will we love and pray for them throughout this year?

This next picture is what many consider as the most holy church site in the world. It is believed to be at the site where Jesus was crucified and buried.

In this one building 6 different denominations with different languages worship here each week. Most of them are Palestinian Christians but there are people from all around the world who go here to worship.

It is a picture of the global church.

Unity with diversity.

Today we pray for the global church. That the unity of diversity will be Christlike and beautiful.

As Christians all over the world bear with one another in love.

We bear with one another in love.

So, in the words of our Palestinian sisters,

**I beg you live a life worthy of your calling and
bear with our brothers and sisters in love.**

