

Forgiveness and Unforgiveness - case studies

Gordon Wilson – lost his daughter Marie in Enniskillen after an IRA bomb killed 11 people.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/20257328>

On the 8th of November 1987 a crowd gathered in Enniskillen, Northern Ireland at a monument for the war dead, for a memorial service on Remembrance Day. A bomb planted by the IRA, meant to kill soldiers and policemen at the service, went off ten minutes early. Eleven people, all but one civilian, died in the explosion and under the rubble, and one man left in a coma died 13 years later without recovering consciousness. Sixty-three people were injured. The Provisional IRA was forced by its own supporters to apologize, and the incident has come to be seen as a turning point in the Troubles.

Marie Wilson was a twenty-year-old girl who had been standing near the monument with her father, Gordon Wilson. They were buried under bricks.

We were both thrown forward, rubble and stones and whatever in and around and over us and under us. I was aware of a pain in my right shoulder. I shouted to Marie was she all right and she said yes, she found my hand and said, "Is that your hand, dad?" Now remember we were under six foot of rubble. I said "Are you all right?" and she said yes, but she was shouting in between. Three or four times I asked her, and she always said yes, she was all right. When I asked her the fifth time, "Are you all right, Marie?" she said, "Daddy, I love you very much." Those were the last words she spoke to me. She still held my hand quite firmly and I kept shouting at her, "Marie, are you all right?" but there wasn't a reply. We were there about five minutes. Someone came and pulled me out. I said, "I'm all right but for God's sake my daughter is lying right beside me and I don't think she is too well." She's dead. She didn't die there. She died later. The hospital was magnificent, truly impressive, and our friends have been great, but I miss my daughter, and we shall miss her but I bear no ill will, I bear no grudge. She was a great wee lassie, she loved her profession. She was a pet and she's dead. She's in heaven, and we'll meet again.

Don't ask me please for a purpose. I don't have a purpose. I don't have an answer, but I know there has to be a plan. If I didn't think that, I would commit suicide. It's part of a greater plan, and God is good. And we shall meet again.

*I have lost my daughter, and we shall miss her. But I bear no ill will. I bear no grudge. Dirty sort of talk is not going to bring her back to life.**

Marie's father told the BBC that he forgave her killers and added: "I shall pray for those people tonight and every night."

"Gordon Wilson's quiet dignity had a profound effect on many people in Northern Ireland. He was later involved with initiatives to improve community relations in Enniskillen and eventually was appointed to the Senate in the Republic of Ireland. Gordon Wilson died on 27 June 1995 aged 68." --From the website of [CAIN](#) [Conflict Archive on the INternet], *Conflict and Politics in Northern Ireland (1968 to the present)*

Julie Nicholson - A vicar whose daughter was killed in the 7/7 bombings has quit as she cannot forgive the Islamic terrorists who carried out the attacks.

The Rev Julie Nicholson has been unable to return to the pulpit since her 24-year-old daughter Jenny died on the Circle Line Tube train blown up at Edgware Road in London.

Now the 52-year-old has given up her post in the parish of St Aidan with St George, Bristol, because she cannot balance her faith with her feelings towards the bombers.

"I knew instinctively and intellectually that I am not a bitter person, an unforgiving person. I don't think I have ever hated anybody in my life. But I was aware I could come to hate these people for what they did to Jenny and then I had to think, if I allow myself to become consumed by hatred, then it is a double tragedy – and what kind of model would that be for my remaining children?"

So she does not hate the bomber? "Well, hate is an odd word isn't it? I would have to understand that word a lot more but if you hate somebody, you wish them great ill, and he's dead. I am full of loathing for him, full of loathing, but I won't allow myself to talk about hatred."

In some ways, she feels no less a priest now than she ever did. Perhaps, one day, she will return. "But I had been rocked to the very core and I was in a healing ministry. I was too fragile to be working with people. I was just too hurt to carry out the functions of a parish priest. I could not have thought of conducting a funeral ... I could not have stood in front of a young couple and married them without thinking, you should be my daughter ... I could not have baptised a baby ... and people deserve more than that."

It would, she admits, have been hard to use words of peace and reconciliation, but there were other, more practical, considerations. She said to a parishioner: "I can't get through an hour without crying." How could she get through the liturgy of the Eucharist? "People will understand," the parishioner said. Perhaps. "They may understand one week, or the next, but they might not understand if it went on week after week and actually, there are all sorts of people sitting in the congregation with their own hurts and traumas and I don't think they need their priest to be raising that to the surface all the time. So there was a bigger picture. Forgiveness was part of it but it wasn't the whole picture."

Read more: <http://www.scotsman.com/lifestyle/interview-the-rev-julie-nicholson-1-476857#ixzz3uUMwXCqI>

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