

Fake News / Good News and Reconciliation

We hear a lot nowadays about so-called fake news. It has to be admitted that not everything one reads in newspapers or sees on the television is always completely accurate or free from bias. Some sources are better than others in that respect. Some news, perhaps inevitably, is untrue, fake. And that is by no means a new phenomenon. Examples from the past can be cited, even back into the nineteenth century. The media can have a powerful influence and they can be used for ill as well as for good. On the whole, though, a free press is an essential part of any democracy.

So-called fake news is not always untrue, though. It can instead be a useful way for those in positions of power or influence to rebut claims and charges made against them, even if the evidence for those claims is quite strong. It is a convenient way of dismissing criticism. One hopes that time will tell which of the parties is right.

One of the serious effects of fake news, whether genuinely untrue or not, is to deepen divisions. It undermines any attempts at reconciliation. It is counter-productive. Instead of dialogue there are simply monologues on each side with no mutual meeting point.

One cannot claim that Christians are always completely free from fake news themselves. What we proclaim, though, is not fake news but Good News, as St Paul reminds us in our Bible reading just now (1 Corinthians 15.1-6). This is Good News because its source is not human but comes instead from God. With God one can rely on the truth. Indeed with God one cannot escape the truth. For God is truth.

That Good News is one of love: God's love for humanity shown in the life, death and resurrection of his Son Jesus Christ, the whole purpose of which was to save humanity from sin and death. That purpose can indeed be summed up in the word reconciliation: reconciliation between God and humanity, and reconciliation between human beings.

In human conflicts the prerequisite for reconciliation is, if not love, then at the very least respect and a willingness to listen to the other person. Only if we take the other person seriously, however much we may disagree with them, can real and meaningful dialogue take place.

Our hope and our prayer is for greater openness and honesty in public life in our world, that truth may have the upper hand over lies and half-truths. We pray that fake news may give way to good news, to the truly Good News of God's love.

20th October 2017
Kingsley Boulton