

World Press Freedom Day

Today, 3rd May, is kept as World Press Freedom Day, having been proclaimed as such by the General Assembly of the United Nations in December 1993.

This annual day is intended as, to quote, “an opportunity to: celebrate the fundamental principles of press freedom; assess the state of press freedom throughout the world; defend the media from attacks on their independence; and pay tribute to journalists who have lost their lives in the line of duty.”

The Secretary General of the United Nations, António Guterres, is quoted as saying:

"No democracy is complete without access to transparent and reliable information. It is the cornerstone for building fair and impartial institutions, holding leaders accountable and speaking truth to power." End of quote.

The theme for this year is: Media for Democracy: Journalism and Elections in Times of Disinformation. The main event has been taking place in Addis Ababa in Ethiopia over the last three days. It has been discussing current challenges faced by the media in elections, along with the media's potential in supporting peace and reconciliation processes, and so very relevant to our concerns. We all know about the dangers of misinformation and fake news, and how that can undermine efforts at peace and reconciliation.

Press freedom is very important in any democratic society, particularly now with the power of social media and the internet. Yet of course with freedom comes responsibility. And it has to be said that parts of the press are less responsible than others. Accuracy, balance and fairness are vital requirements in any reporting.

And we should also not only be fed bad news. As well as all the very real conflicts and problems in our world there are also good things happening which should not be forgotten.

Christians should be very much aware of the many serious issues in our world today. Yet the news we are called to problem is Good News, especially in this Easter season – as St Paul so powerfully reminds us in our Bible reading just now (Romans 10.11-15).

Our news is the Good News of God's love, God's love for all, revealed through the death and resurrection of his Son Jesus Christ. There is surely no better news than that.

Kingsley Boulton
3rd May 2019