



A Mission In Peril:

Celebrating The Media in Troubled Times

A Commemorative Service
at
St Bride's Church, Fleet Street
City of London

Tuesday 12th November 2013
6.30pm



INTRODUCTION

The word "mission" implies a sense of vocation, a calling to go to the frontiers and trouble-spots of the world to understand, to interpret and to bear witness. It is a word with unmistakably religious connotations but it is also an appropriate description of the journalist's duty to keep in touch with all that is happening in the world, to spot the events of significance, and to relay them to others in a form which can be readily understood.

Public enlightenment is the forerunner of justice and the foundation of democracy. As journalists we further those ends by seeking truth and providing a fair and comprehensive account of events and issues. Recent events in the Middle East and especially in Syria have highlighted the importance of accurate reporting on the ground and the risks associated with this.

This year, our title "**A Mission In Peril: Celebrating The Media in Troubled Times**" refers not only to those on the front line, but to everyone in an industry which more than ever faces perils now and uncertainty ahead.

So tonight we remember once again all whose mission it is to bring us the news, sometimes at terrible cost, and we celebrate the profession of journalism, and the priceless value of freedom of speech.

ORDER OF SERVICE

INTROIT

Psalm 121 – Henry Walford Davies

THE BIDDING

Welcome to St Bride's and to this special service of commemoration and celebration. Here at St Bride's we recently made our second bursary award to a student on the M.A. course in newspaper journalism at City University, Rozina Sabur. She wrote in her application about her passion for investigative journalism and her belief in aspiring to the highest standards within her chosen profession. As we reflect on the role of journalism in society, and commemorate our colleagues who have died, it is encouraging to know that a new generation of young journalists is eager to take up the baton of investigative and frontline reporting, at a time when the industry is facing immense challenges.

As consumers of news in a fast changing world, we demand a great deal of our journalists and our foreign correspondents. It is right that we celebrate the contribution journalists make to the well-being of our society, and that we commemorate those who have died reporting from the trouble-spots of the world. Tonight we pray for all the members of our profession, especially those facing times of uncertainty, trusting that all our words, written and spoken, may be reflections of the divine word, and that beyond our brief day is the eternity of God's love.

Amen.

HYMN

Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise.

Immortal, invisible, God only wise,
In light inaccessible hid from our eyes,
Most blessèd, most glorious, the Ancient of Days,
Almighty, victorious, thy great name we praise.

Unresting, unhasting, and silent as light,
Nor wanting, nor wasting, thou rulest in might;
Thy justice like mountains high soaring above
Thy clouds which are fountains of goodness and love.

To all life thou givest – to both great and small;
In all life thou livest, the true life of all;
We blossom and flourish as leaves on the tree,
And wither and perish – but nought changeth thee.

Great Father of glory, pure Father of light,
Thine angels adore thee, all veiling their sight;
All laud we would render, O help us to see
'Tis only the splendour of light hideth thee.

FIRST READING

Read by Ian MacGregor
Editor, The Sunday Telegraph

Ecclesiasticus 4: 20-28

The writer urges us to speak up for what is right, even if that causes offense, and always to strive for the truth.

Observe the right time, and beware of evil; and do not bring shame on yourself.

For there is a shame which brings sin, and there is a shame which is glory and favour.

Do not show partiality, to your own harm, or deference, to your downfall.

Do not refrain from speaking at the crucial time, and do not hide your wisdom.

For wisdom is known through speech, and education through the words of the tongue.

Never speak against the truth, but be mindful of your ignorance.

Do not be ashamed to confess your sins, and do not try to stop the current of a river.

Do not subject yourself to a foolish fellow, nor show partiality to a ruler.

Strive even to death for the truth and the Lord God will fight for you.

CHOIR

Turn! Turn! Turn! – Pete Seeger arr. Robert Jones

SECOND READING

Read by Amanda Platell
Columnist, Daily Mail

The Deserted Village – Francis Wheen

This piece was written in 1999 for inclusion in The Penguin Book of Journalism.

When nostalgic types say that things aren't what they used to be I am usually sceptical, but as soon as I walk down the old Street of Adventure I turn into a maudlin sentimentalist. The only nocturnal sound in the deserted thoroughfare – once a cacophony of rattle and hum – is the braying of lawyers and PR men in El Vino. Oh my Addison and my Steele long ago!

While wallowing in this lachrymose nostalgia recently, I decided to re-read the autobiography of GK Chesterton. My reverie was instantly shattered. 'I belonged,' he wrote in 1936, 'to the old Bohemian life of Fleet Street, which has since been destroyed, not by the idealism of detachment, but by the materialism of machinery. A newspaper proprietor in later years assured me that it was a slander on journalism to tell all these tales about taverns and ragged pressmen and work and recreation coming at random at all hours of the night. "A newspaper office is now exactly like any other place of business," he said with a radiant smile; and I agreed with a groan.' Journalism, Chesterton concluded, 'is [now] conducted as quietly, as soberly, as sensibly as the office of any successful moneylender or moderately fraudulent financier'.

It is simultaneously depressing and cheering to discover that the Golden Age to which one looks back with such yearning was itself regarded as dull and anaemic by a previous generation. Can it be that, in thirty years' time, old hands will reminisce mistily about the 1990s, lamenting with a wild regret the day when national newspapers moved from the Bohemian precincts of Wapping and Canary Wharf to the sober, sensible outskirts of Milton Keynes?

CHOIR

Here, O My Lord – Percy Whitlock



THE ADDRESS

Lindsey Hilsum
International Editor, Channel 4 News

HYMN

O Christ The Same, Through All Our Story's Pages

O Christ the same, through all our story's pages,
Our loves and hopes, our failures and our fears;
Eternal Lord, the King of all the ages,
Unchanging still, amid the passing years:
O living Word, the source of all creation,
Who spread the skies, and set the stars ablaze,
O Christ the same, who wrought man's whole salvation,
We bring our thanks for all our yesterdays.

O Christ the same, secure within whose keeping
Our lives and loves, our days and years remain,
Our work and rest, our waking and our sleeping,
Our calm and storm, our pleasure and our pain:
O Lord of love, for all our joys and sorrows,
For all our hopes, when earth shall fade and flee,
O Christ the same, beyond our brief tomorrows,
We bring our thanks for all that is to be.

THIRD READING

Read by Richard Norton-Taylor
Security Editor, The Guardian

My Friend Yasser by James Hider

This article was written by the then War Correspondent of The Times, and appeared on 27th January 2010.

Another day, another round of bombs in Baghdad. A blip that barely registers in the news after so many years of bloodshed, and quickly blurs into the endless images of familiar carnage.

Except this day was different for me and many of my colleagues who have covered the Iraq war. This was the day that my friend Yasser vanished in that inevitable cloud of grey smoke that you see on your television screens or newspaper pages.

Yasser was The Times's driver for the past seven years, since the fall of the regime that he had hated so much. He joined the newspaper pretty much the same week I did, and together we worked through the bloodiest periods of the war. Yasser – whose surname I cannot put in print, even now, because of the danger to his brother, who also works as a Times driver – was one of the thousands of Iraqis who have made the media coverage of the war possible: uncredited, unsung heroes of a war most people would rather forget.

He had survived some terrifying episodes, from being "ethnically cleansed" with his family by Sunni insurgents from their home in 2006, when they moved into our hotel but did not stop working, to blocking the road with his car as a vehicle full of armed kidnappers tried to abduct a Times reporter one evening near the Tigris river. He saved my life and the lives of colleagues at the risk of his own, only to step out of The Times office at exactly the wrong moment on Monday, the moment when a suicide car bomber fought his way into the compound and blew himself up.

Over the years Yasser and his brother became close to all of us: they would be waiting at the airport when we flew in to drive us along the notorious Route Irish road when it was still a daily death trip; they would hug us like brothers when we left, always with a promise to return. But they did not just drive us into battle zones: they bought us cakes on our birthdays, invited us, when it was safe, to their home for meals cooked by their mother. Through the years we went to their weddings, saw Yasser become a proud father of two girls and, recently, hope for a better future for the country.

Yasser was a kind and funny man who had seen too much misery but retained his ability to crack a wicked joke. When we met, he told that me he had learnt English when training as a vet, but had never practised because he did not like any animals except for sheep. He was sweet and courteous, and called my girlfriend "Prince" until we pointed out that it was a male name. He cackled at his own mistake.

On one of my first outings with him through the lawless streets, he suddenly executed a U-turn through gridlocked traffic and sped off: he had spotted a gang of looters pulling people from the cars ahead, stabbing them and stealing their vehicles. Another time, when we were grabbed by the notorious al-Mahdi Army militia, masked gunmen dragged me and my translator off to an unknown destination in Sadr City. As a Shia from the area, Yasser could have driven off and no one would have blamed him: instead, I was hugely relieved to spot him through the rear window belting after us. He stayed with me until we managed to negotiate our release.

The last time I was in Baghdad, almost a year ago, Yasser made me promise to return. I will, very soon, but too late to see his smiling face. He was buried by his family yesterday in the Shia holy city of Najaf. Instead, I will be greeted by his inconsolable brother, who was too devastated to do anything more than cry when I phoned him yesterday. I cried with him, because Yasser was not just another faceless statistic. He was a friend and a heroic colleague who will be missed forever.

CHOIR

Bring Us, O Lord God – William Harris

THE PRAYERS

Father in Heaven, we thank you for those journalists who risk their lives to bring us the news, and we commemorate those who have died on the frontline during the past twelve months and those missing or held hostage.

Lord hear us.

All: Lord, graciously hear us.

Comfort, O Lord, we pray, those mourning the loss of loved ones. Be with them in their sorrow and give them faith to look beyond the troubles of the present, knowing that nothing can separate us from your love.

Lord hear us.

All: Lord, graciously hear us.

Strengthen, Lord we pray, all who work in the media, those working through difficulty and uncertainty, and especially those facing legal proceedings at this time. May they find strength in Thy presence and in the support of friends and colleagues.

Lord hear us.

All: Lord, graciously hear us.

Almighty God, direct and bless those who in this generation speak where many listen and write what many read, especially all journalists, broadcasters and writers whose words so powerfully influence the life of the nation.

Lord hear us.

All: Lord, graciously hear us.

Lord, keep us safe in times of trouble, keep us strong in times of trial, keep us cheerful in times of need, and keep us firm in the defense of freedom of speech, now and always.

Lord hear us.

All: Lord, graciously hear us.

Amen.

HYMN

Mine Eyes Have Seen The Glory Of The Coming Of The Lord

Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord;
He is trampling out the vintage where the grapes of wrath are stored;
He hath loosed the fateful lightning of his terrible swift sword:

His truth is marching on.

Glory, glory, Hallelujah!

Glory, glory, Hallelujah!

Glory, glory, Hallelujah!

His truth is marching on.

He hath sounded forth the trumpet, that shall never call retreat;
He is sifting out the hearts of men before His Judgement seat.

O be swift, my soul, to answer Him; be jubilant my feet!

Our God is marching on.

Glory, glory, Hallelujah!

Glory, glory, Hallelujah!

Glory, glory, Hallelujah!

Our God is marching on.

In the beauty of the lilies Christ was born, across the sea,
With a glory in His bosom that transfigures you and me;
As he died to make men holy, let us live to make men free,

While God is marching on.

Glory, glory, Hallelujah!

Glory, glory, Hallelujah!

Glory, glory, Hallelujah!

While God is marching on!

He is coming like the glory of the morning on the wave;
He is the wisdom to the mighty, he is succour to the brave:
So the world shall be his foot-stool, and the soul of time his slave:

Our God is marching on!

Glory, glory, Hallelujah!

Glory, glory, Hallelujah!

Glory, glory, Hallelujah!

Our God is marching on!

THE BLESSING

Go forth into the world in peace; be of good courage; hold fast that which is good; render to no one evil for evil; strengthen the faint-hearted; support the weak; help the afflicted, rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit.

And the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be amongst you and remain with you, now and always.

Amen.

CHOIR

Bridge Over Troubled Water – Paul Simon arr. Robert Jones

The retiring collection will go to support **St Bride's Church**, the spiritual home of journalists throughout the world, and our current **Inspire! Appeal**.

There will be a reception after the service in the Voltaire Bar at The Crowne Plaza Hotel, 19 New Bridge Street, EC4.





Our thanks go to a number of organisations and individuals
who have helped to make this service possible:-

News UK

Daily Mail and General Trust

Richard Desmond

Trinity Mirror

The Independent

Evening Standard

Telegraph Media Group

Guardian Media Group

Financial Times

Images In Print





St Bride's Church
FLEET STREET, LONDON EC4Y 8AU

Rector
The Venerable David Meara

Director of Music
Robert Jones

Organist
Matthew Morley

