Blessing of Journalists at Christ Church Cathedral
February 20, 2018

On the Commemoration of Frederick Douglass, 1811-1895
Orator and Advocate for Truth and Justice; Editor of pro-abolition journal, North Star

“The conscience of the American public needs this irritation. And I would blister it all over, from center to circumference, until it gives signs of a purer and a better life than it is now manifesting to the world.” - Frederick Douglass, Speech before the American Anti-Slavery Society, May 11, 1847.

Dean’s Welcome

Hymn 293, “I Sing a Song of the Saints of God”

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**Reading**  
**Micah 6:8**

Hear what the Lord says: Rise, plead your case before the mountains, and let the hills hear your voice. Hear, you mountains, the controversy of the Lord, and you enduring foundations of the earth; for the Lord has a controversy with his people, and he will contend with Israel. ‘O my people, what have I done to you? In what have I wearied you? Answer me! For I brought you up from the land of Egypt, and redeemed you from the house of slavery; and I sent before you Moses, Aaron, and Miriam. O my people, remember now what King Balak of Moab devised, what Balaam son of Beor answered him, and what happened from Shittim to Gilgal, that you may know the saving acts of the Lord.’

‘With what shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before God on high? Shall I come before him with burnt-offerings, with calves a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, with tens of thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?’ He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?

**Response**  
**Psalm 15**

1 O LORD, who may abide in your tent? Who may dwell on your holy hill?
2 Those who walk blamelessly, and do what is right, and speak the truth from their heart;
3 who do not slander with their tongue, and do no evil to their friends, nor take up a reproach against their neighbors;
4 in whose eyes the wicked are despised, but who honor those who fear the LORD; who stand by their oath even to their hurt;
5 who do not lend money at interest, and do not take a bribe against the innocent.
Those who do these things shall never be moved.

**Reading**  
**Constitution of United States of America 1789 (rev. 1992)**

Amendment I: Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances.

**Meditation**

“There is a Balm in Gilead” – John Cheek

**Reading**  
**Excerpt from MESSAGE OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS FOR WORLD COMMUNICATIONS DAY -- 24 January 2018**

The Rev. Lauren Holm

“Informing others means forming others; it means being in touch with people's lives. That is why ensuring the accuracy of sources and protecting communication are real means of promoting goodness, generating trust, and opening the way to communion and peace.

I would like, then, to invite everyone to promote a journalism of peace. By that, I do not mean the saccharine kind of journalism that refuses to acknowledge the existence of serious problems or smacks of sentimentalism. On the contrary, I mean a journalism that is truthful and opposed to falsehoods, rhetorical slogans, and sensational headlines. A journalism created by people for people, one that is at the service of all, especially those – and they are the majority in our world – who have no voice.”
Response 607  “O God of Every Nation”

1 O God of every nation, of every race and land,
2 From search for wealth and power and scorn of truth and right,
3 Lord, strengthen all who labor that we may find release
4 Keep bright in us the vision of days when war shall cease,

redeem the whole creation with your almighty hand;
from trust in bombs that shower destruction through the night,
from fear of rarding saber, from dread of war’s increase;
when hatred and division give way to love and peace,

where hate and fear divide us and bitter threats are hurled,
from pride of race and nation and blindness to your way,
when hope and courage falter, your still small voice be heard;
till dawns the morning glorious when truth and justice reign

in love and mercy guide us and heal our strife-torn world.
de liver every nation, eternal God, we pray!
with faith that none can alter, your servants undergird.
and Christ shall rule victorious o’er all the world’s domain.

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Music: Llangollen, melody from Hymnau a Thionau cy Gwasanaeth yr Egwy se yng Nghymru, 1865; harm. The English Hymnal, 1906
Reading  Frederick Douglass
“If there is no struggle, there is no progress. Those who profess to favor freedom, and yet depreciate agitation, are men who want crops without plowing up the ground. They want rain without thunder and lightning. They want the ocean without the awful roar of its many waters. This struggle may be a moral one; or it may be a physical one; or it may be both moral and physical; but it must be a struggle. Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never did and it never will.”

Response, LEVAS, 227 “We Shall Overcome”

Gospel  John 8:30–32  The Very Reverend Tom Callard, Dean

Exhortation  The Most Reverend Douglas Fisher, Bishop
Prayers of the People

We pray, in this changing era of journalism, for those from the various forms of media who fulfill the sacred trust of reporting on the lives and events of this world.

We remember especially those who are pressured by their government, those who are threatened and silenced, those who are put in harm’s way by their work, and those who have lost their lives throughout the world reporting on the news.

We remember those whose news has been labeled “Fake,” and whose stories and reporting have been dismissed and belittled.

We pray for those whose truth is not valued and whose voices are not free.

In particular, we pray for men and women who are newspaper journalists, whose words grace the pages of our lives.

We pray for television reporters and journalists, those appearing on camera and those working behind the scenes.

We pray for radio journalists, whose voices carry the weight of events from near and far.

And we pray for journalists working through the internet, exploring the truth of the media in a new way.

We pray for the members of the White House Press Corps, whose work is so central to the functioning of our democracy. We pray for their persistence and dedication to the truth and their commitment to an impartial and free press.

And we pray for civility in our public discourse, for our ability to rise above surface differences and set aside personal agendas and bias, and we ask for God’s grace to seek the undivided truth – that truth has nothing to fear, that all will be revealed in the light, and that every story is a story of God’s creation, worthy of being shared.

The Celebrant says the following collect:

O God, you made us in your own image and redeemed us through Jesus your Son: Look with compassion on the whole human family; take away the arrogance and hatred which infect our hearts; break down the walls that separate us; unite us in bonds of love; and work through our struggle and confusion to accomplish your purposes on earth; that, in your good time, all nations and races may serve you in harmony around your heavenly throne; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Bishop’s Blessing

A Prayer for Journalists
St. Francis de Sales, patron saint of writers and journalists adapted.

Journalists, please stand.

Bishop: Almighty God,
Strengthen and direct, we pray,
the will of all whose work it is to write what many read,
and to speak where many listen.

**Assembly:** May we be bold to confront evil and injustice: understanding and compassionate of human weakness; rejecting alike the half-truth which deceives, and the slanted word which corrupts.

**Journalists:** May the power which is ours, for good or ill, always be used with honesty and courage, with respect and integrity, so that when all here has been written, said and done, we may, unashamed, meet [God] face to face.

**Bishop:** And may the blessing of God Almighty. Amen.

**Recessional Hymn 594, “God of Grace and God of Glory”**
hour, for the facing of this hour.
days, for the living of these days.
goal, lest we miss thy kingdom’s goal.
dore, serving thee whom we adore.