

Cheyenne Boon:

(silence).

Cheyenne Boon:

Good morning. Welcome to morning prayers. Today's service will begin with a responsive reading from the black Appleton Psalter book, Psalm number 27, found on page 14. Please remain masked and rise in body or spirit to read responsibly by whole verse.

Cheyenne Boon:

"The Lord is my light and my salvation. Whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life. Of whom shall I be afraid?"

Congregation:

When evildoers assail me, uttering slanders against me, my adversaries and foes, they shall stumble and fall.

Cheyenne Boon:

Though a host in camp against me, my heart shall not fear. The war arise against me, yet I will be confident.

Congregation:

One thing have I asked of the Lord that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord and to inquire in His temple.

Cheyenne Boon:

For He will hide me in His shelter in the day of trouble. He will conceal me under the cover of His tent. He will set me high upon on a rock.

Congregation:

Give me not up to the will of my adversaries, for false witnesses have risen against me and they breathe out violence.

Cheyenne Boon:

I believe that I shall see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living.

Congregation:

Wait for the Lord, be strong, and let your heart take courage. Yea, wait for the Lord."

Choir:
(singing).

Bao Choy Yuk-ling:

Good morning. Here is a reading from Proverbs chapter 31. "Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the right of all who are destitute. Speak up and judge fairly. Defend the rights of the poor and needy." Day and night, and for 365 days a year, journalists around the world are trying our best to speak up for prisoners and powerless people. We are on the front lines to report the pandemic, elections, refugees, conflicts, crisis. People are awash with news, and news of such significance and impact on all our lives, that sometimes we are all overwhelmed. Some of our response is to tune out, turn off the TV and radio, and opt out for news updates and blame the messengers for their faults.

Of course, journalists are not perfect. Indeed, we are far from perfect. We make mistakes, a lot of mistakes. Two years ago, Pope Francis met 400 journalists at the Vatican. He recognized the significance of humble and free journalism and its contribution to the search for the truth, and only the truth makes us free. But he also urged the journalist to work according to truth and justice so that communication is truly an instrument for building, not for destroying; for meeting, not for clashing; for dialoguing, not for monologuing; for orienting, not for disorienting; for understanding, not for misunderstanding; for working in peace, not for showing hatred; for giving a voice to those who have no voice, not for being a megaphone to those who shout louder.

Under a global decline in press freedom, a prayer for the media is particularly meaningful. If we support the search for truth, the recall of many forgotten situations of suffering and wars, and those victims being persecuted and discriminated against for their faith or their ethnicity. We should do this because we are right now in a democracy where we still enjoy freedom of the press, which is not a worldwide phenomenon. According to the UNESCO, around 1,500 journalists were murdered in the past 20 years. Right now in Venezuela, Turkey, Myanmar, Columbia, and the Philippines, and in many other countries, many journalists were held in prisons. In my home city, Hong Kong, once the biggest pro-democratic newspaper, Apple Daily, was forced to shut down this June. Its founder, Jimmy Lai, and five executive and editorial staff, were put into prison without trial. Personally, I was arrested last November and found guilty for my journalistic work. In China, a citizen journalist named Zhang Zhan was sentenced to four years for her reporting on the government mishandling of the pandemic. We are not sure whether she could survive from her hunger strike in the prison this winter.

We may think ourselves too small to change anything, but there are no small "s" in standing for freedom. Every one of us can add according to our conscience. Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves. In this way, we are all living within the truth. Let us be thankful for the gift of the media, with messages of hope and life. Let us pray for those journalists who risk their security and even their lives to expose injustice and to bring news of hope. May they have the courage, honesty, compassion, and integrity to offer truth, to overcome the lies, light to shine in dark places, refreshment to those who are thirsty, and food to those who are hungry. May those who lost their freedom and suffer from the search for the truth be safe and peaceful. And may they be reunited with their beloved ones sooner than later. May we also pray for ourselves collectively to be relentless in the search for truth and justice. Amen.

Cheyenne Boon:

Now please rise in body or spirit and let us pray together as Jesus taught us, saying, "Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on Earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, forever and ever. Amen." Let us sing the hymn, Come Thou Long Expected Jesus, number 106, found in your crimson Harvard hymnal.

Congregation:

(singing).

Cheyenne Boon:

As we go into this day, let us bless and keep one another. Let us make peace. Let us be at peace. May it be so, and may the church say amen.