

## International Women's Day

Yesterday was International Women's Day. To quote from the United Nations website:

“International Women's Day is celebrated in many countries around the world. It is a day when women are recognized for their achievements without regard to divisions, whether national, ethnic, linguistic, cultural, economic or political. International Women's Day first emerged from the activities of labour movements at the turn of the twentieth century in North America and across Europe.

Since those early years, International Women's Day has assumed a new global dimension for women in developed and developing countries alike. The growing international women's movement, which has been strengthened by four global United Nations women's conferences, has helped make the commemoration a rallying point to build support for women's rights and participation in the political and economic arenas.

The Charter of the United Nations, signed in 1945, was the first international agreement to affirm the principle of equality between women and men. Since then, the UN has helped create a historic legacy of internationally-agreed strategies, standards, programmes and goals to advance the status of women worldwide.

Over the years, the UN and its technical agencies have promoted the participation of women as equal partners with men in achieving sustainable development, peace, security, and full respect for human rights. The empowerment of women continues to be a central feature of the UN's efforts to address social, economic and political challenges across the globe.”

You might well have assumed that to be self-evident. But of course it is a recognition that not only throughout history but even in our world today women do not always enjoy equality with men. And that applies as much to the Christian Church as to other areas of life.

This is even reflected in the Bible. Though there are marvellous affirmations of the place and role of women in God's eyes, not least those words from St Paul to the church in Galatia that we heard just now (Galatians 3.23-29): there are no longer any distinctions based on ethnicity or religious background, social status or gender. For as the story of creation affirms, men and women are all made in the image of God (Genesis 1.27).

The challenge globally, and not least for Christians, is to put that belief into practice. Everyone should have the freedom and the opportunity to use whatever talents they have for the common good, for the much needed work of peace and reconciliation, in order to make ours a better world – or, in Christian terms, to make God's kingdom a reality here and now.

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