

## DIAKONIA Prayer Letter May 2026

It used to be called a 'duck'. A 'newspaper duck'. And anyone who wanted to point out, in a less flippant way, that they simply couldn't believe the news, would say 'false report'. Yes – those are objective words. Correct German words. But somehow so dispassionate.

As I've grown older, my passion for Anglicisms has waned. Rapidly. But I must admit: 'Fake News' is a wonderful word. I don't think we have a word in German that allows you to express so passionately what you think of a piece of information. 'Fake News'. Some people also say 'alternative facts'.

When we hear the first news reports in the morning about developments in the Middle East and the war against Ukraine – and these are just examples – can we still distinguish what is true, what is real, what has been cleverly spun, or what is simply a lie? Half-truths and bits of information. Suspicions. Insinuations. Fake news, in short. And how many individuals and parties spread it with relish and shamelessly exploit it for their own ends. Distinguishing lies from the truth is no easy task. Especially not when the debate over right and wrong takes place in a heated climate.

But what is the truth? The images we see? They are all too easy to manipulate. What's in the good old newspaper? What someone posts on Facebook, shares on 'x', or shows on Instagram? That doesn't become any truer just because it's shared.

An age-old question! What is truth? Four weeks ago we celebrated Easter. Then we read again in the Gospel of John how the Roman governor Pilate interrogated the accused Jesus. The question is whether Jesus is an impostor or actually something like a 'King of the Jews'. Pilate doesn't really know what to make of this Jesus. Nor does he fully understand the motives of the accusing Jerusalem religious authorities. In the end, he breaks off the interrogation with a certain degree of resignation. 'What is truth?' he asks, shrugging his shoulders, and leaves the room.

Jesus spoke often about the truth. He promised his friends: "You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." Well, that's just great. And then I read the news ...

What is truth? I learn from Jesus: that which sets us free – that is truth.

Sadly, it's true: people are very resourceful, There are always those – on a large and small scale – who cannot resist the temptation to exercise ill-gotten power, to manipulate and oppress people. The dissemination of genuine, accurate, false and fabricated news, sometimes downright amateurish, is certainly an effective means when it comes to enslaving people in body, mind and spirit.

All this has nothing to do with the truth that Jesus means. The truth of which Jesus speaks is more than just being able to distinguish between facts and fake news.

Truth is – one might say – first and foremost an attitude. That we strive to be sincere. That we do not conceal what must be said, even if it hurts.

Reality – not truth – certainly has many facets. But it is only true if it sets us free! "You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."

Perhaps that is what freedom is: having a nevertheless-confidence in life.

The freedom not to let fear and overwhelming worries have the last word.

The freedom to hope – and, even better, to trust – that God accompanies me, us and the people in the conflict and crisis regions of this world on my, our, their journey, and that He means well by me, by us and by them.

Quite a challenge...

"Hallowed be Thy name – not mine,

Thy kingdom come – not mine, Thy will be done – not mine.

Grant us peace with Thee, peace with others, peace with ourselves  
and deliver us from fear." Amen

by Dag Hammarskjöld