

Thought of the Day - 8 May 2020

Adriaan van Klinken (All Hallows)

Readings: Exodus 35: 20 – 36: 7 and Luke 4: 14-30

Freedom back

Earlier this week I went to pick up a friend from a hospital for mental health. He had just been discharged, having spent there over five weeks. During that time, the lockdown measures had been imposed. He had not been allowed to receive any visitors or to leave the building himself for a walk and some fresh air. Driving from the hospital, I asked him how he felt. 'Freedom', he said, 'I've got my freedom back'. Later, when we got home, he gave me a long and firm hug, saying 'I've missed this so much'.

Anyone who, as a result of the current COVID-19 pandemic, has spent a long time isolating at home, possibly alone with no other person physically present to talk to, to kiss or to hug, may recognise those feelings. We long for the day to have our freedom back.

In our Gospel reading from Luke, Jesus reads the words of the prophet Isaiah and applies these to himself and his mission:

"The Spirit of the Lord is on me,
because he has anointed me
to proclaim good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners
and recovery of sight for the blind,
to set the oppressed free,
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour."

These words can be read as a socialist manifesto, concerned with the poor, the imprisoned and oppressed. They are the target of the Lord's favour that Jesus has come to deliver. Certainly, there is a social gospel here. But this message applies to all of us.

Jesus' mission is to put us, as human beings, in freedom. He liberates us from everything that keeps us small, that restricts our potential and that impedes our vision. His presence in our lives is liberatory. It announces the year of God's favour, where all of us will flourish to the fullest.

I pray that my friend will experience this as he recovers from his illness. I pray that those of us who struggle most with the current lockdown will experience this in their isolation and frustration. I pray that the poor and the oppressed who are most vulnerable during this global pandemic will experience this as they struggle to survive. That all of us will have our freedom back – freedom to flourish to the fullest.