



St Marylebone
Parish Church

**The Solemnity
of the Most Holy
and Undivided Trinity
2021**

Nina Simone sings, magnificently, 'I wish I knew how it would feel to be free'. [*choir to sing*]

This time last year freedom was escaping home school, zoom, or the confines of the M25.

Nina sings of a history of slavery and prejudice, of course. This last week saw the anniversary of the murder of George Floyd, a poignant reminder that freedom is not here yet. Flick on the news and add to that wars, modern slavery, exploitation. Where and what is freedom?

In *our* day to day, freedom might feel like taking your mask off as you leave a building. Or those few quiet moments before the kids wake up or the email avalanche falls. Freedom from fears about money or strain on relationships or worries about children or elderly parents. The *world* is singing 'O I wish I knew how it would feel to be free'...

Freedom it seems, is freedom *from* something. But as ever, our Christian faith gives us a deeper and more radical perspective. Not freedom *from* but freedom *to*, hold that thought.

Freedom from slavery, prejudice or poverty are clearly vital, but simply the *lack* of bad things isn't *true* freedom, it's just the start. Even when we're free of the Corona virus, will we be truly free? Survey after survey in recent years tell us that we in the west today are richer, healthier, 'freer' than we've ever been and yet more *unhappy*. We are not free.

Today's feast shines a light on our wondering. Today we celebrate a great truth, a great mystery. That God (unknowable and beyond imagining) *that* God reveals God's self as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. As those glorious doxologies at the end of the New English Hymnal hymns put it (O, how I miss singing them!): 'Ever Three and ever One : Consubstantial, co-eternal, While unending ages run.'

And now we come back to asking for freedom.

The Trinity is the *model* of our being; of course it is, it is the *source* of our being. It would be ludicrous to seek the pattern for life, freedom and anything else that matters anywhere else but how God shows it to be.

So what do we find when we take God as our pattern for living? We find that the Father loves the Son and the Holy Spirit without holding anything back, without fear of betrayal or reserve of any kind, without condition or demand. Complete self-emptying love. But the Father is not ruined by this all-consuming love because in exactly the same way and to the same degree the Son loves the Father and the Holy Spirit, without wish for them to be different, and without expectation of this or that, and the Son is not destroyed by this either because of the Father's love for Him, and the Holy Spirit's corresponding love for Father and Son.

It is the perfection of freedom and being, in love given and received without fear of consequence or selfish expectation; a Trinity of love into which throughout our lives we are being called. True freedom and true life look like *that*. God's way of being is the model for all *our* living and loving: at home, work, Church, local and global communities.

Our imperfect (and blimey aren't they just?) *faltering* steps, our flawed and wobbly embodiment of this perfect pattern of Trinitarian love is the highest calling upon our lives. We came from this love, we were Baptized into this love, we feast on this love in Holy Communion, one day we will perfectly rest in this love; in the meantime, this love which is our *destiny* is our *daily* calling, and our highest good.

And what has any of this got to do with freedom? We find in God, and God's nature as our pattern and path for living, that true freedom and true life is not freedom *from*, but freedom *to*.

Not the *absence* of awful things, or the security of earthly possessions, the safe solitude of independence or the nuclear family. We find that true freedom and true life can only *be* when we have realised that we are loved, and I mean really loved, without reserve, condition, expectation or control. Simply and completely loved by the mysterious God who is revealed as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Loved enough for us to be loved into being, loved enough for Christ to be broken and His blood poured out, loved enough for the Holy Spirit to be in us and around us every moment of every day of our lives. Loved *so, so* that we can do the same, and *learn to love as we have been loved*. Free *to*, free to love. Loved to love no matter what. To love God back with all our heart and soul and mind and strength, and our neighbours as ourselves... A life spent putting the love of Father, Son and Spirit into practice, and *then* we might begin to know what it is to be free.