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Freedom

In recent weeks, as we've heard the shouts of 'Freedom!' from the Arab world, we've been grateful that we live in a democracy, with free speech and a free press. We are free! But we don't always feel free, do we? We often feel trapped by the pressures of daily life, the lists of 'things to do'. And what of those who are full-time family carers for the disabled or elderly, who scarcely have a minute to themselves? Or those who are prisoners of alcohol or drug addiction? Or those who are trapped on an emotional level, with resentments or hurts or guilt or griefs that they can't shake off, or who know permanent loneliness because they seem unable to form relationships? Is freedom simply a utopian dream?

Faith claims that it is much more than that, in fact that it is a gift that is open to anyone who sincerely asks for it. In the New Testament Paul writes 'Where the spirit of God is, there is freedom'. And in another letter he proclaims 'the glorious freedom of the children of God'. Of course this doesn't mean freedom from all suffering. But it does mean an inner freedom of mind and heart that will give us peace and hope and strength to cope. From outside, people often think that it entails yet more constriction of our lives by all sorts of narrow rules and obligations. But on the contrary, the promise is of liberation, tailor-made for each individual's personal needs and circumstances. Yet more wishful thinking? Many can testify to its truth.