

St Magnus Cathedral, Kirkwall

www.stmagnus.org

Scottish Charity SCO 05322/CCL No 119086

www.facebook.com/StMagnusCathedralCongregation



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Welcome to St Magnus Cathedral this morning. It was founded in 1137 by St Rognvald, in honour of Magnus, his uncle. The Cathedral belongs to the people of Orkney and its doors are open to all. If you are a visitor, we hope this order of service will help you feel part of our worship together.

SUNDAY 18th October

You can find our Sunday worship here.

<https://www.facebook.com/StMagnusCathedralCongregation/>

or on YouTube here.

https://youtu.be/cdoWL_aKE44

Join our Wednesday ZOOM meditation by signing up here.

stmagnuszoom@gmail.com

Opening meditation

Welcome, be at peace, be comforted and challenged now to be more of who you are and are yet becoming. Welcome you all to the journey, the vibrant and often vexing way of life – full of surprise and awe – if we but look. Welcome you first-timers, you long time participants, you who are curious. You who are troubled or lonely or angry. You in all your varieties, orientations and personalities. Live and feel peace now for peace is within you; it is part of your core; it is your way of living and your constant ideal to be realized.

Reading

From Genesis 37 read by Helen Killeen

Jacob loved Joseph more than he did any of his other sons, because Joseph was born after Jacob was very old. Jacob had given Joseph a fancy coat to show that he was his favourite son, and so Joseph's brothers hated him and would not be friendly to him. One day, Joseph told his brothers what he had dreamed, and they hated him even more. Joseph said, "Let me tell you about my dream. We were out in the field, tying up bundles of wheat. Suddenly my bundle stood up, and your bundles gathered around and bowed down to it." His brothers asked, "Do you really think you are going to be king and rule over us?" Now they hated Joseph more than ever because of what he had said about his dream. Joseph later had another dream, and he told his brothers, "Listen to what else I dreamed. The sun, the moon, and eleven stars bowed down to me." When he told his father about this dream, his father became angry and said, "What's that supposed to mean? Are your mother and I and your brothers all going to come and bow down in front of you?" Joseph's brothers were full of envy, but his father kept wondering about the dream.

For the word of God in scripture, For the word of God among us. For the word of God within us. We give thanks.

Reflection

Envy is one of the seven deadly sins in Christianity, a violation of the commandment against coveting in Judaism, and an affront to key values in the other world religions. Everybody seems to agree that it is a nasty piece of business that has no place in the spiritual life. Yet envy is almost inevitable in cultures that are driven by consumerism, where the goal of the game is to be the one who ends up with the most toys. Celebrities and other conspicuous consumers constantly remind us of all the things we could have. The health of the economy, politicians add, depends upon our shopping habits.

Envy starts at an early age when we are exposed to all those television commercials. We grow up wondering, "Why can't I have what they have?" and find ourselves chanting, "I want, I want, I want." Even usually kind people turn into predators coveting their neighbours' things. Soon envy's old cronies, anger and resentment, show up as well.

Another cultural phenomenon that feeds envy is called 'the abuse of rank.' The rich and the powerful don't have to abide by the rules or limitations imposed upon the rest of us. Often those who have the most, use their status as a weapon against others. Such assaults on dignity take place every day... when a boss humiliates an employee, a coach bullies a player, a teacher disdains a student, or a top official travels to other end of the country in a lockdown.

It's a pity the Persian philosopher Abu Hamid al-Ghazali lived a few thousand years after Joseph's brothers in our story. Otherwise they would have done well to heed his words.

"Know that envy is one of the major diseases of the heart, and the disease of the heart is not cured except by the medicine of both knowledge and action."

What he meant by that was firstly, that the knowledge cure was this. We know that our envy harms only ourself and does not harm the one we envy. Often indeed it benefits them. As for it harming ourselves, it is that it nullifies our good deeds and good intentions, for we are discontent with the blessings and

the good things we have. Envy signals a destabilising discontent with one's lot that can place our beliefs under suspicion and on shaky ground. This is obviously harmful to the envier's spiritual life.

As for the harm to our worldly life. When we are caught up in envy, we are prisoners of someone else. We are letting what they do and what they have determine how we feel about our lives.

This has been described as being ensnared in a sticky spider's web. In other words we can't move toward what we can be, what we can have. We can just gaze longingly at someone else's life and long for it. So envy wins out. We increase the sum of the world's anger, we increase the sum of the world's dishonesty by not admitting it, and we don't grow in our own joy.

The fuel that feeds envy is comparisons. So whenever we find ourselves unfavourably comparing ourselves to others, how about we remember this thought by the Baal Shem Tov, a Jewish sage: "Everybody is unique. Compare not yourself with anybody else lest you spoil God's curriculum." A good spiritual practice to help us deal with this is called "being a watcher." Notice when we are feeling envious and say "Oh, there I go again, making comparisons." The next time we hear ourself comparing our life to someone else's, say, "Oh, there's envy coming up again."

Another effective antidote to envy is the practice of gratitude. As we were taught when we were children. 'remember to say thanks!'. It's hard to get into the comparison game when we are truly thankful for all the bounties that have been bestowed upon us. 'Count your blessings one by one,' as the old children's hymn reminds us. Whenever we find ourselves falling into the trap of coveting the possessions, power, wealth, beauty, or fame of another, make a list of all the gifts we have been given. Counting our blessings helps keep the envy bug away.

But maybe the best antidote to envy could be gratitude for what others have received. Mahatma Gandhi put it this way: "If you believe that God pervades everything, you must believe that you cannot enjoy anything that is not given by God, and seeing that He is the Creator of his numberless children, it follows that you cannot covet anybody's possessions." Now.. that's a pretty good way of explaining the value of the Tenth Commandment! Indeed, it is a great gift to be able to gracefully celebrate the happiness and success of someone else.

Prayer

In all our joys and in all our concerns, may we be ever mindful of the presence of the Spirit among us,

For those who feel like they've aged ten years in the last six months: May they be gentle with their creaky bones, their clouded head, their shortened fuse, allowing their own pains to fill their heart with compassion for the other aching souls around them. May they listen to their exhaustion as a reminder to rest, reshape their weariness as a gateway to tenderness, reframe their worry as an invitation to attention, and may they celebrate themselves as sages-in-training, body, mind, and spirit not only aging, but growing wiser with each new lesson of each new day, especially when each of those days feels like a week.

For those who are experiencing more solitude than usual: May they fall in love with themselves again, not forcing happiness, but digging for the deep joy that can only come during moments spent alone. May they acknowledge spikes of lonely fear, but may they also set intentions for how they might choose to plan, instead of panicking, how they might choose to create connection with themselves, instead of coming apart at the seams, and may they remember that they are the ones who know themselves best, and that they're well worth getting to know even better.

For those who are having trouble keeping up: May they step back and look at all they do, and may they have patience with themselves, remembering that these past six months have forced us into new ways of working, new ways of organising, entirely new ways of simply being. May their leniency for their own slowness allow them to model a bit more patience for everyone around them, assured that an honest, intentional pace is far more sustainable and effective than an unnecessarily rushed urgency.

May all know love, receive strength, and live in peace. In times of stress and self-doubt may all be upheld, have patient endurance, and the knowledge that even unknowingly, by what they do, they walk in the way of Christ.

Blessing

Go now and walk lightly upon the earth,
for the places in which you stand, walk, play, work, love, sleep, are holy.

May you stay safe in the Way of Christ, and may you be blessed by his Spirit
this day and always.

