

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 25th October

You can find our Sunday worship here.

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

or on YouTube here.

<https://youtu.be/LfTyevGAkNM>

Join our Wednesday ZOOM meditation by signing up here.

stmagnuszoom@gmail.com

Opening meditation

May we love ever more.

May we motivate ourselves to committed love in action.

May we motivate ourselves to live the life we wish to see in the world.

May we be the transformation we wish to see in the world.

From the inside out . . .

From the roots branching upwards . . .

From the heart

to thought

to word

to action.

Through life's trials and hardships

we can arise beautiful and free.

Reading Matthew 22, 34-46 read by Anne Flint

After Jesus had made the Sadducees look foolish, the Pharisees heard about it and got together. One of them was an expert in the Jewish Law. So he tried to test Jesus by asking, "Teacher, what is the most important commandment in the Law?" Jesus answered:

Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and mind. This is the first and most important commandment. The second most important commandment is like this one. And it is, "Love others as much as you love yourself." All the Law of Moses and the Books of the Prophets are based on these two commandments.

While the Pharisees were still there, Jesus asked them, "What do you think about the Messiah? Whose family will he come from?" They answered, "He will be a son of King David."

Jesus replied, "How then could the Spirit lead David to call the Messiah his Lord? David said,

The Lord said to my Lord:

Sit at my right side^[e]

until I make your enemies

into a footstool for you.'

If David called the Messiah his Lord, how can the Messiah be a son of King David?" No one was able to give Jesus an answer, and from that day on, no one dared ask him any more questions.

**This is the Gospel of Christ.
May we hear wisdom**

Reflection

I have been much taken recently – it's probably my age- by Richard Rohr's idea of spirituality in the second half of life — what he calls falling upwards. The Christian life, not as a goal to be achieved but as a gift to be received. Discovering our calling does not mean scrambling toward some prize just beyond our reach but accepting the treasure of true self we already possess. Calling does not come from a voice 'out there' calling us to become something we are not. It comes from a voice 'in here' calling us to be the person we were born to be, to fulfill the original selfhood given to us at birth.

It is a strange gift, this birthright gift of self. But is this not exactly what Jesus was alluding to in our story when he said "Love others as much as you love yourself." The logic of that would determine that to love others we must first be able to love ourselves. Accepting that gift of self actually turns out to be even more demanding than attempting to become someone else! We may have sometimes responded to that demand by ignoring the gift, or hiding it, or fleeing from it, or squandering it — and I think we are not alone.

There is a tale from Judaism that reveals, with amazing brevity, both the universal tendency to want to be someone else and the ultimate importance of becoming one's self: Rabbi Zusya, when he was an old man, said, 'In the coming world, they will not ask me: 'Why were you not Moses?' They will ask me: 'Why were you not Zusya?'

If we doubt that we all arrive in this world with gifts and as a gift, pay attention to an infant or a very young child. This is something that is often noticed amongst new grandparents more even than parents, who quite naturally, are bombarded with practical things to do for the newborn. Watching their grandson or granddaughter from their earliest days on earth, grandparents are able, in the second half of life as Rohr says, to see something that had eluded them as a twenty or thirty-something parent: that their grandchild had arrived in the world as *this* kind of person rather than *that*, or *that*, or *that*.

As one perceptive grandparent remarked about her new granddaughter....
"She did not show up as raw material to be shaped into whatever image the world might want her to take. She arrived with her own gifted form, with the shape of her own sacred soul."

Right at the very beginning of the book of Genesis, Biblical faith calls it the image of God in which we are all created. Mystic Christian monk Thomas Merton calls it true self. Quakers call it the inner light, or 'that of God' in every person. The humanist tradition calls it identity and integrity. No matter what we call it, it is a pearl of great price.

In those early days of life, we can begin to observe the inclinations and proclivities that were planted in a child at birth. We can notice, what they like and dislike, what they are drawn toward and repelled by, how they move, what they do, what they say.

Another grandparent reflected and took action. He said 'I am gathering my observations in a letter. When my granddaughter reaches her late teens or early twenties, I will make sure that my letter finds its way to her, with a preface something like this: 'Here is a sketch of who you were from your earliest days in this world. It is not a definitive picture — only you can draw that. But it was sketched by a person who loves you very much. Perhaps these notes will help you do sooner something your grandfather did only later: remember who you were when you first arrived and reclaim the gift of true self.'

We arrive in this world with birthright gifts — then we spend the first half of our lives abandoning them or letting others disabuse use of them. As young people, we are surrounded by expectations that may have little to do with who we really are, expectations held by people who are not trying to discern our selfhood but to fit us into slots. In families, schools, workplaces, and religious communities, we are trained away from true self toward images of acceptability; under social pressures like racism and sexism our original shape is deformed beyond recognition; and we ourselves, driven by fear, too often betray true self to gain the approval of others.

As educationalist Charity James maintains. 'We have to recognise that we are an exploratory, creative, problem-solving species, whose best and most assured statements are necessarily contingent, speculative and partial. Knowledge is an activity, not a commodity. The attempt to separate thinking from feeling has been a disastrous failure; it is the whole person who learns and acts.'

We are so often disabused of original giftedness in the first half of our lives. Then — if we are awake, aware, and able to admit our loss — we can spend the second half trying to recover and reclaim the gift we once possessed. Is this not what Richard Rohr alludes to in his phrase 'Falling Upward?' Is this not what Jesus exhorts us not to forget... That to love others we must first love ourselves, which means at the very least, being true to ourselves.

Prayer

People such as us, who live in plenty — who have to go out of our way to see anyone who is without the physical necessities of life; who decide *what* we shall eat, not *whether* we can eat; who complain about the price of petrol as we drive alone in vehicles that were meant to carry four or five others; who throw away two to three large bags of rubbish every week; who buy water in plastic bottles when our tap water is perfectly safe — need reminders.

We pray this day:

for all who have a song they cannot sing,
for all who have a burden they cannot bear,
for all who live in chains they cannot break,
for all who wander homeless and cannot return,
for those who are sick and for those who tend them,
for those who wait for loved ones and wait in vain,
for those who live in hunger and for those who will not share their bread,
for those who are misunderstood and for those who misunderstand,
for those who are captives and for those who are captors,
for those whose words of love are locked within their hearts
and for those who yearn to hear those words. Amen

Blessing

St. Francis of Assisi

'May you be blessed with discomfort at easy answers,
half truths and superficial relationships,
so that you may live deep within your heart.
May you be blessed with anger at injustice,
oppression and exploitation of people,
so that you may work for justice, freedom and peace.
May you be blessed with tears to shed
for those who suffer from pain, rejection, starvation and war,
so that you may reach out your hand
to comfort them and to turn their pain into joy.

And may you be blessed with enough foolishness
to believe that you can make a difference in this world,
so that you can do what others claim cannot be done!

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