

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 28th February

You can find our Sunday worship here.

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

or on YouTube here.

<https://youtu.be/h881qIQ1Fps>

Join our Wednesday ZOOM meditation by signing up here. stmagnuszoom@gmail.com

Welcome

From the fragmented and often chaotic world of our everyday lives, we gather together in search of wholeness. We bid you welcome, those who come with weary spirit seeking rest.

We bid you welcome, those who come with hope in your hearts, those who come proud and joyous, those who come to learn and explore

Opening meditation

We light this Candle to light our way as we journey to Jerusalem, the cross, and the tomb.

May it's light strengthen us where the road is hard, embolden us when our hearts lose courage, and bring hope as the road grows dark.

Reading Psalm 148, 1-13 "A cosmic hymn of praise." Rosie

"Alleluia!

Let heaven praise Yahweh;
Praise him, heavenly heights,
Praise him, all his angels,
Praise him, all his armies!
Praise him, sun and moon,
Praise him, shining stars,
Praise him, highest heavens,
And water above the heavens!

Let them all praise the name of Yahweh,
At whose command they were created;
He has fixed them in their place for ever,
By an unalterable statute.

Let earth praise Yahweh:
Sea-monsters and all the deeps,
Fire and hail, snow and mist,
Gales that obey his decree,
Mountains and hills,

Orchards and forests,
Wild animals and farm animals,
Snakes and birds,
All kings on earth and nations,
Princes, all rulers in the world,
Young men and girls,
old people, and children too!
Let them all praise the name of Yahweh..."

**May we be struck by the wisdom of these words
and marked by hearing them.
For within story lies meaning, and
within meaning, the wisdom for which we seek.**

Reflection

Traditionally Lent has been a time for Christians to embark on what is sometimes called the *Via Negativa*. The experience of Stillness and Silence and emptying. And also our experience of suffering, loss and grief. These result in letting go and letting be. For Westerners the *via negativa* seems to be our default position in many ways.

We love to wallow in our woe, in our sinfulness, and anything that depresses us.

Yet in these times of pandemic that we have all been going through I wonder this year if the *Via Negativa* is appropriate or even good for our spiritual lives. Would it be just too much to bear for some?

It might be better, given where we are to focus on another spiritual path the *Via Positiva*. Our experience of awe and wonder, delight and beauty, that results in Gratitude and Reverence and Joy.

Let's look at these in turn.

Gratitude

The medieval German philosopher, Meister Eckhart once said.

"If the only prayer you say in your whole life is 'Thank you,' that would suffice." Thomas Aquinas says that the essence of real religion is: Gratitude. He puts religion in the context of the virtue of thankfulness or gratitude. The word "Eucharist" which is often used for Christian worship means in Greek: to give thanks.

In Judaism, the Sabbath is a time for giving thanks. We need to *remember* the profound gift of existence, the gift of life, that is ours to cherish, to live fully, to pass on to others and to share. And worship is such a remembering.

Gratitude is an attitude toward life, a realization that we are all receivers, none of us gave ourselves our own existence or our own lungs or air to fill them or soil to walk on and to grow food on. It was there from the beginning, having evolved over a 13.8

billion year time of gestation and birthing on the part of the universe and countless beings and species and occasions.

Reverence

There is a kind of *reverence* that is learned from an experience of joy and awe and gratitude, one comes to realize the depths of the Hindu practice of saluting another with a bow with hands folded saying, "*Namaste*," which can be translated, "I salute the Divine in you." (Or the Christ, or the Buddha, or the Image of God, or....) To revere is to acknowledge that there is holiness and greatness besides just ourselves. We honour the beauty and the sacred in others.

Joy

Joy is something we receive, it is a grace, not an accomplishment we attain by striving. That is why it is so big, it can even embrace sorrow and suffering, it is that big. Thomas Aquinas teaches that "Sheer Joy is God's and this demands companionship." In other words, joy is the very reason for the universe. The Divine joy spilled over and wanted to share itself. All joy is like that—it yearns to be shared.

It clearly takes practice to appreciate the *via positiva* then, and not just practice, but a healthy theology that each one of us is an image of God.

When Jesus says, "Love others as you love yourself," he's presuming that we've got a *via positiva* going for us, and someone has loved us enough that we learned those lessons of healthy self love early. Unfortunately, we can't take that for granted. So we need to work on the *via positiva*, and how it applies to us....

Many people in service professions shortchange their own needs. Eckhart instructs us that "Compassion begins at home with one's own soul and one's own body." A compulsive service treadmill can convince us we think all our loving is about giving to others. And that's just not accurate. Time for reflection and contemplation.... ME time.... is appropriate, to pay attention to oneself and our own needs. Healthy self-love is a starting point along with the realization that we are beloved by the universe.

Hand in hand with that is the need today to be responding on a larger scale. Today the struggle is for the air and the waters and the forests and the soil and the oceans and the animals and the fishes and the trees and the insects and so much more. But first we have to love all these beings. The crisis we face today is opening up our minds and hearts far beyond the human agenda. For neither family members nor countrymen and women will be served or saved if the other species are lost. More than ever, then, we need to stop and sit and be present to the *Via Positiva* to allow our love for the world and the world's love for us to be deeply felt. This can carry us beyond nationhood and ethnic or racial or religious smallness into the much bigger world of creation itself. Love will be the source of our energy and of our imaginations that will render us effective agents for deeper change. Not superficial

change, but a change that begins and ends with the reverence and gratitude we all carry in our hearts toward the universe that has birthed us.

Prayer

**Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.
Your Kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours.
Now and for ever. Amen.**

Blessing

Let us go our separate ways, facing and serving the world with confidence,
generosity and freedom.
Let us live out the heart of religion which is to bring together all that is divided, to
live in the moment, to love mightily
and to reverence the mystery,
beauty and spirituality of all things and all people.

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