

St Magnus Cathedral, Kirkwall

www.stmagnus.org

Scottish Charity SCO 05322/CCL No 119086

www.facebook.com/StMagnusCathedralCongregation



Minister: Rev Fraser Macnaughton

Tel: 873312

FMacnaughton@churchofscotland.org.uk

Pastoral Minister: Rev. June Freeth

Tel: 721449

JFreeth@churchofscotland.org.uk

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 April

You can find our Sunday worship here.

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

or on YouTube here.

<https://youtu.be/vwLBmWWwQdQ>

Join our Wednesday ZOOM meditation by signing up here.

stmagnuszoom@gmail.com

Welcome

As the light of new life shines out from the Empty Tomb,
So may we in this Easter season shine with the light of hope and share the
promise of life.

We come with open hearts to hear the voice of the sacred
singing through our words and songs
breathing the word into our silences
challenging us in our speaking and listening
and calling the people down the ages.

Opening meditation

Nothing is lost to the eyes of God, nothing is lost forever,
God sees with love,
and that love will remain, holding the world forever.
No journey too far,
no distance too great,
no valley of darkness too blinding; no creature too humble,
no child too small for God to be
seeking and finding.

Reading from John 20 1-3; 11-18 Rosie Wallace

Early in the morning on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary of Magdala came to the tomb. She saw that the stone had been rolled away from the entrance, so she ran off to Simon Peter and the other disciple—the one Jesus loved—and told them, “The Rabbi has been taken from the tomb!

We don’t know where they have put Jesus!”

Later, Mary stood weeping beside the tomb. Even as she wept, she stooped to peer inside, and there she saw two angels in dazzling robes. One was seated at the head and the other at the foot of the place where Jesus’ body had lain. They asked her, “Why are you weeping?” She answered them, “Because they have taken away my Rabbi, and I don’t know where they have put the body.” No sooner had she said this than she turned around and caught sight of Jesus standing there, but she didn’t know it was Jesus. He asked her, “Why are you weeping? For whom are you looking?” She supposed it was the gardener, so she said, “Please, if you’re the one who carried Jesus away, tell me where you’ve laid the body and I will take it away.” Jesus said to her, “Mary!” She turned to him and said, “Rabboni!”—which means “Teacher”. Jesus then said, “Don’t hold on to me, for I have not yet ascended to Abba God. Rather, go to the sisters and brothers and tell them, ‘I’m ascending to my Abba and to your

Abba, my God and your God!" Mary of Magdala went to the disciples. "I have seen the Teacher!" she announced. Then she reported what the saviour had said to her.

**Even as we seek understanding, our minds
too often shelter us from the realities we might uncover.
May we have the courage to hear and hold truths found within these
words**

Reflection

Mary Magdalene.... Few of the characters in the gospels stories has roused such debate, affection, fury, challenge than this guardian of spirituality because her story, like so many of those pertaining to the divine feminine, reminds us that the journey of spirituality is sometimes an act of reclamation and recovery, in which we rescue what has been covered up from the patriarchal past, and bring its truth and illumination to bear on the present. What we know about Mary Magdalene asserts — this time through the prism of the early Christian tradition — that the spirit of the Christian faith didn't always devalue the body or the feminine.

As has so often happened to women before her, what was once Mary Magdalene's especial, favoured status became fully negated over time. Jesus' most devoted and faithful follower. ONE of few who remained by Jesus' side through his trial, suffering, crucifixion and death (other than John, the men were not up for this...including Peter!).

THE ONE Jesus appeared to in the resurrection at the tomb... and...
THE ONE Jesus ordained to tell the others.

However, Mary Magdalene became known over time as the penitent whore, a tradition, by the way, begun by Pope Gregory in a sermon in 591. But the change was so complete that institutions claiming to rehabilitate 'fallen women' — prostitutes and unwed mothers — became known as 'Magdalenes' in the each of the part of the UK. The familiar depiction of her at the cross, her face streaked with tears, became synonymous with cheap or 'maudlin' sentiment.

Yet the woman revealed in the New Testament is a woman unafraid of looking into the heart of things; she expresses herself with physical gestures — she cries, she kneels, she touches. The Gospel traditionally ascribed to John describes Mary Magdalene moving toward the risen Jesus to embrace him — only to be told 'Don't hold on to me.'

She, not Jesus' mother, is the only female eyewitness to the central mystery of the Christian faith, the Resurrection; she is distinguished not only by her gender, but by the nature of her belief. Unlike Jesus' male followers, she needs no tactile proof to believe what she has seen; she is persuaded by the sound of Christ's voice alone.

But then that's the last we hear of her. Did she die or disappear into the mist? Or....did she simply get edited out? As we know history belongs to the victors, and by the time the New Testament writings now known as Timothy and Acts were completed, Mary Magdalene was no longer counted among the apostles, who became an all-male band of twelve. When the resurrected Christ's appearances are catalogued in Acts, his appearance to Mary Magdalene in the garden isn't even mentioned.

Mary Magdalene the sinner is the bookend to the other Mary, Jesus' mother; the dualism of the two Marys — one the whore, the other the virgin inviolate — became the either/or standard for women that animated the Christian tradition and, by extension, became part of the vocabulary of the secular West. As such, Mary Magdalene is part of the backdrop of many cultural archetypes and mythologies pertaining to women. She became in time, the 'Whore with the Heart of Gold' — think Julia Roberts in *Pretty Woman* — beloved of Hollywood. Even her 'maudlin' behaviour informs society's idea of what is feminine (weak and sentimental) and masculine (strong and tearless).

But for those who are seeking a spirituality that will reflect a more nuanced and balanced identity — less either/or and more both/and..

Mary Magdalene represents a spiritual history that can be reclaimed for the present and can restore wholeness and continuity to long and revered story of the divine feminine.

Mary Magdalene is the only one of Jesus' followers mentioned in the Gospels who isn't described as someone's wife or mother. This may signal her independence, but it may equally reflect that her own status or that of her husband was so important that she needed no identification. Instead, she belonged only to the place she was born, a town called Magdala, meaning 'tower,' 'high place,' or alternatively, 'great.'

Images of towers and cities once crowned the ancient goddesses, and the most holy places of the ancient religions were peaks and mountains; by her name, Mary of Magdala is located within that tradition. She teaches us that, in search of the spirit, we can lay claim to a vision of the feminine in which body and soul are united within the divine.

Encouragingly, if belatedly, in 1988 Pope John Paul II said, this "woman proved stronger than the Apostles" and called Mary Magdalene the "apostle of the apostles."

Perhaps then, the primary female figure in the Christian story should be Mary Magdalene, not the "Virgin Mary." Placed beside Mary Magdalene, Jesus' mother is a pale, shadowy figure in the gospels. However, history was rewritten and the woman who was at Jesus' side during his earthly life had her character assassinated by the church.

Although the real Mary Magdalene is still shrouded in mystery, it just might be that she best represents the feminine side of Christianity.

Prayer

Each individual belongs to family in one form or another. May these family networks kindle new sparks of connection, of love and loyalty – for this familial web is strong and a source of great encouragement. May each family system, whether estranged, enmeshed or balanced, be given a boost of life-giving energy; be given over to honesty, tenderness, memories shared and hopes renewed.

These families comprise our communities and islands. May this community benefit from a rising consciousness and intentionality within our families. Families who care, who give, who provide hospitality, that look beyond themselves for the greater good. Families making up the village of common humanity beyond conventions and proprieties, the stiff and stifling boundaries unnecessarily dividing us.

And then the nations: May our national fervour include a widening posture toward the good of all people everywhere. May any unbridled patriotism turn to balanced pride and critique; may any tribal or isolated element turn to opening arms and minds to the alien in our midst and to the blurring boundaries of our interconnected and expanding world.

We lift up all individuals filled with hopes, needs, loss, grief, excitement, orientations, health, dis-ease and all that is human. Let us keep on respecting those around; let us keep on affirming each's notions and allegiance to the divine within, between and beyond. Amen

 blessing
 Go now with
 love, joy, and peace,
to practice patience, kindness, goodness,
 faithfulness, humility, and self-control,
 so that the world will know
 that you belong to Christ Jesus.

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