

## **St Magnus Cathedral, Kirkwall**

[www.stmagnus.org](http://www.stmagnus.org)

Scottish Charity SCO 05322/CCL No 119086

[www.facebook.com/StMagnusCathedralCongregation](https://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.

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### **SUNDAY 4<sup>th</sup> July**

You can find our Sunday worship here.

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

or on YouTube here.

[https://youtu.be/pYisY\\_raZNM](https://youtu.be/pYisY_raZNM)

Join our Wednesday ZOOM meditation by signing up here.

[stmagnuszoom@gmail.com](mailto:stmagnuszoom@gmail.com)

Welcome and candle lighting

This flame is warm as the companionship of friends is warm.

Let us celebrate the richness and diversity of life  
in the presence of God.

Gathering meditation and a time of Silence

Meditation

There are those whose sincerely held faith  
is that our world is merely material,  
demonstrably physical,

measurable, subject to analysis,  
ultimately definable.  
But are there hidden depths  
in the realm others name as spiritual?  
Does it have to be, one or the other?  
Could there be  
the mind-blowing physical  
integrated with the depth-revealing spiritual?  
It seems likely  
that fullness of life,  
intricately, interdependently,  
comes only  
when we pay attention to,  
explore and value both.  
Astonishing discoveries,  
insightful reflection  
deepen our understanding,  
enable wiser ways of living  
in this wonderful  
God-created,  
Spirit-permeated world.

Reading

**Bible Reading: Mark 9 30-40**

They left that district and began a journey through Galilee, but Jesus did not want anyone to know about it. He was teaching the disciples along these lines: "The Promised One is going to be delivered into the hands of others and will be put to death, but three days later this One will rise again." Though they failed to understand these words, they were afraid to question him. They returned home to Capernaum. Once they were inside the house, Jesus began to ask them, "What were you discussing on the way home?" At this they fell silent, for on the way they had been arguing about who among them was the most important. So Jesus sat down and called the Twelve over and said, "If any of you wants to be first, you must be the last one of all and at the service of all." Then Jesus brought a little child into their midst and, putting his arm around the child, said to them, "Whoever welcomes a child such as this for my sake welcomes me. And whoever welcomes me welcomes not me but the One who sent me." John said to Jesus, "Teacher, we saw someone using your name to expel demons, and we tried to stop it since this person was not part of our group." Jesus said in reply, "Don't try to stop it. No one who performs a

miracle using my name can speak ill of me soon thereafter! Anyone who is not against us is with us.

## Reflection

What an interesting and modern story in Mark 9:

A story about relationships.

A story about the potential use and abuse of status or power.

It reminds me of another story.

A well known CEO of a large multi-national company suggested two of his brightest young executives be considered for rapid promotion.

They were so creative and so intelligent and so hard working.

They deserved to be rewarded.

Everyone knew, including the executives whom the CEO had passed over, that one or the other of them would be the next CEO.

One, we will call Freda, was appointed General Manager of the company.

The other, we will call Fred, was appointed deputy CEO.

They had been close friends for 20 years and their combined talents and dedication

had in part been responsible for the rapid growth of the firm.

However, once it became clear to both of them that only one could win the top job, they began to try to undermine one another.

Their friendship ended.

Their spouses stopped speaking to one another though they had been friends too.

The other executives enjoyed the power struggle and plotted how they could undermine both of them.

Now the big problem was the two stopped co-operating with one another.

And that co-operation had been a key to much of the firm's success.

Sales fell off, a little at first and then quite dramatically.

The shareholders, as you can imagine, didn't like that at all.

Two months before the current CEO was to retire, the Board of Directors intervened and fired him.

Then they brought in a new CEO from another company.

Everyone said that if the two had only co-operated,  
as they had in the past, both would have won.

A colleague of mine reminded me of another story.  
Of an incident in the life of Archbishop Desmond Tutu.

He was apparently walking one day past a construction site,  
on a temporary footpath, the width of only one person.

A white man appeared at the other end, recognised Tutu and said:  
"I don't give way to gorillas".

At which Tutu stepped aside, made a deep sweeping gesture, and said,  
"Ah yes, but I do".

And can't you see the twinkle in the Tutu's eyes as he did that?  
Wouldn't you love to be able to think as quick as that?

What a way to confront power and arrogance!  
A blatant racist put-down intended to deny and destroy dignity,  
being turned back by wit and a non-violent compliance  
that preserved Tutu's dignity  
and challenged the claimed power of the oppressor.

Two disciples are arguing about which of them is the greatest.  
According to the storyteller Mark, Jesus doesn't take the prevailing social view.  
Rather, he takes their dispute and turns it unexpectedly on its head.

He holds up a child, a symbol of vulnerability and powerlessness...  
"Whoever welcomes a child such as this for my sake welcomes me."

Jesus contrasts the disciples' quest for power  
with an assertion that only those who accept the powerless  
and vulnerable will receive God.

But let's get real, some may shout! It's a dog-eat-dog world.  
People are pitted one against the other.  
The strong survive. The weak perish.

Sometimes it is.

Most of the time, thankfully, it isn't.

But maybe because this debate always seems to be cast  
in the 'power' verses 'powerlessness' arena,  
we tend to end up in a no-win situation.

What if there is another way of looking at 'power'?

There is. And I can only suggest this, as to this thinking.

Several people who work out of a way of thinking called 'process theology'  
have made what I feel are helpful comments.  
They talk about 'unilateral' power and 'relational' power

Unilateral power  
seems to be about seeking to influence others  
in order to advance our own purposes.  
It pits individuals and groups against other individuals and groups.  
It implies the gain in power of the one,  
means the loss of power in the other.

Fred and Freda were in the arena called unilateral power.  
Perhaps the two disciples also were in that arena.

And it is very disheartening when some church debates operate out of this  
arena.

Relational power  
seems to be about having the ability  
to both absorb and exert an influence,  
to influence others and to be influenced by others.  
It means relationships play a constructive role  
in the creation of individuals and groups  
and in their subsequent freedom to be themselves.

Mark's Jesus seems to be in the arena called relational power.

One of those process theologians, John Cobb, suggests this:  
"The power to expand the freedom of other people is a very different kind of  
power from the power to overpower other people and compel them or force  
them to do something that you have pre-decided you want done".

Maybe think of it as an orchid or epiphyte. For an orchid to survive it must seek out a host plant.

While it gains water and nutrients from the host plant it does not overpower or destroy this plant.

Indeed it protects it from the risks of nitrate poisoning and contributes to the repair and flourishing of both plants.

Like the orchid , our life - both personal and as a church – is built in relationships with others.

The important question for us in the light of Mark's story is, I would suggest: will our relationships be based on unilateral power or relational power?

### Prayer

Our world cries in pain, the sins of previous generations have brought terrible consequences to the world and all who live here. We cannot change what has gone, but we can choose to act now for those who will come after us.

Darkness is found wherever love is hidden. May we shine the light of love around the world,  
in our words, our actions and our daily choices.

In places and people in the world where darkness brings pain and anxiety. In places and people in the world where darkness takes away freedom and freewill,  
may Christ's light shine.

In places and people in the world where darkness encourages injustice and violence,

In places and people in the world where darkness offers false hope or fake help,  
may Christ's light shine.

In places and people in the world where darkness seeks to steal power to reign, may we be light bearers, shining the light of love into all the dark corners of the world, today and every day.

### Blessing

Go, allowing the light of Christ to guide you  
and to lead you on the path that leads to life and to love.  
May you stay safe in the Way of Christ,  
and may you be blessed by his Spirit this day and always.

