

St Magnus Cathedral, Kirkwall

www.stmagnus.org

Scottish Charity SCO 05322/CCL No 119086

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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.

You can find our Sunday worship here.

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

or on YouTube here.

<https://youtu.be/tXEowRUP-mo>

Join our Wednesday ZOOM meditation by signing up here.

stmagnuszoom@gmail.com

Candle Lighting and opening meditation

Let there be light.

Wherever darkness is to be put to flight,

"Let there be light

We are blessed
when we feast on the Word:
that Word which embraces us;
that Word which teaches us;
that Word which transfigures us;
that Word which grounds us.

We are blessed
when we have Christ's heart:
a heart for the poor;
for the hungry;
for those who weep;
for the rejected.

We bear fruit
when we are filled with his spirit,
the spirit of generosity,
the spirit of emptying ourselves for others;
the spirit of bearing one another's burdens.

Readings

Ecclesiastes 4; 9-12

You are better off to have a friend than to be all alone, because then you will get more enjoyment out of what you earn. If you fall, your friend can help you up. But if you fall without having a friend nearby, you are really in trouble. If you sleep alone, you won't have anyone to keep you warm on a cold night. By yourself you're unprotected. With a friend you can face the worst. As the saying goes, "A rope made from three strands of cord is hard to break."

1 Peter 4; 8-11

Above all, let your love for one another be constant, for love covers a multitude of sins. Be mutually hospitable without complaining. As generous distributors of God's manifold grace, put your gifts at the service of one another, each in the measure you have received. The one who speaks should deliver God's message. The one who serves should do so with the strength provided by God, so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, who has been given all glory and dominion throughout the ages. Amen.

Reflection

It is a myth to say....*If I can't do it on my own, something's wrong with me.*

It is magic if we accept that ... *Seeking support is a sign of strength.*

At the beginning of January I was privileged to conduct the wedding of Jim Wallace's younger daughter Clare near Inverness. It was a great occasion with folk from all over managing to attend despite Covid. However there was one slight anxiety I had at the reception and that was what would happen if I took to the dance floor. Would my new knee stand it? How embarrassing it would be if I lost my balance and collapsed on the floor in a

heap. However, as the song says, 'the music got me' and to my surprise the new knee stood up well.

Losing balance is an uncomfortable feeling on the street or the dance floor. But it is even more distressing when this problem becomes a regular part of our lives.

One of the greatest lessons we can learn in the inner art of giving and receiving is that asking for support, when appropriate, is not a sign of weakness but a sign of strength. Asking for support is healthy. It means we believe that we are worthy of receiving. Not only that, but it's an act of love. When we seek support in making the best decisions in our life, we are acting out of love — love for oneself and for those who will be impacted by our choices.

Often we need to take a hard look at the delicate dance of giving and receiving in every area of our lives. And make sure we don't lose our balance, between the myth of - if I can't do it on my own, something's wrong with me, ... and the magic of seeking support as a sign of strength.

Now we may think that the effects of support are rather intangible, a touchy-feely kind of business. Yet researchers have shown that support actually increases our chances for a healthier and longer life. An early study in the 1960s is particularly fascinating. Roseto, a small, close-knit town in Pennsylvania settled by Italian immigrants, drew the attention of researchers because the people there had lower rates of dementia and a 40 percent lower rate of heart attacks, even though their diets, cholesterol levels, and other factors (such as smoking and lack of exercise) were no different than others.

So what gave the people of Roseto such an advantage? Researchers pointed to their remarkable cohesiveness, mutual trust, and support. The inhabitants of this small town lived in three-generation households, they had close family and community ties, and they enjoyed their lives. What's just as intriguing is that when those factors changed, the statistics changed too. As the younger generation grew up and became more affluent, some moving away, the traditionally cohesive family and community relationships of Roseto began to erode. Coinciding with those changes, the heart attack rate in Roseto bounced up to the national average.

The sages and the scientists tell us that an environment of community support is a key factor in our spiritual health as well. 'Do not separate yourself from the community,' advised the Jewish sage Hillel.

In Christianity, the community of friends is called the church, from the Greek word *ekklesia*, which originally meant 'assembly' or 'group.' In Buddhism, the community is so central that it is one of the 'three jewels' that a Buddhist turns to for refuge, the other two being the Buddha and the Teaching. The Vietnamese Zen Buddhist monk Thich Nhat Hanh who died last month aged 95, defines the community, which is known as the 'sangha' in that tradition. The community is a group of monks and nuns as well as laymen and laywomen 'who practice together to encourage the best qualities in each other,' says Thich Nhat Hanh. 'To me, to practice with the Sangha means to practice with those who are with you now and with those you love. . . . If it moves in the direction of transformation, it is a real Sangha.'

On the path of honouring ourselves in maintaining that balance, we need to continue to look at our communities, our support networks, in broad ways. Community creates a space, even if it's in cyberspace, where we can receive support and give support.

Our community can be our family, those we work with, those who share our spiritual or personal interests, or those we connect with to pursue creative goals or a service-oriented cause. We can be part of more than one community, because each network plays a different role in helping us honour our inner needs and share our greatest gifts. Whether we are feeling alone, need help, or want to support and serve with others, we might want to consider joining a community that shares our interests and warms our heart. If we can't find one that appeals to us, start our own!

To be clear, by 'support' and 'community' I'm not talking about sympathy that encourages us to wallow in self-pity, indulge in griping, or act the part of a victim. Support is something that holds us up, not keeps us down. Support is loving encouragement as well as honest feedback. Because we can't see ourselves objectively, we need true friends in the setting of community to be a mirror, to reflect back to us what our actions look like. Without interacting with others, how will we know if we are really being loving and generous or close-hearted and selfish? How will we know if we are honouring others and honouring ourselves?

Prayer

We pray for a world deafened by conflict - nations blinded by hatred and oblivious to the instruction of love in the gospels. We offer our prayers for a world seemingly confused between reconciliation and appeasement, between greatness of spirit and weakness of heart. May nations learn to trust their neighbours in a spirit of tolerance and understanding, to negotiate their differences in the spirit of goodwill.

We pray for our community and its people... we pray especially for our schools and colleges, the focus of education and all academic endeavour. May teachers and students be bound together in the spirit of mutual respect and commitment, that the gifts of knowledge and industry may take root and flourish.

We pray for those in need; the sick and the poor, the estranged and the lonely... may the comfort and healing power of the Spirit be instilled in them. May we realise that suffering is the teacher of humility; that another's affliction teaches us to appreciate more fully the blessing of our own relative prosperity.

Blessing

We are one with Jesus,
we are enlivened by the Spirit,

we are all God's children,
and we are blessed,

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