

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.

You can find our Sunday worship here.

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

or on YouTube here.

https://youtu.be/7lh_0_DgM2M

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

Candle Lighting and opening meditation

This is the season of Lent
When we prepare ourselves for the great events of Easter
It is when we look honestly and critically at our lives
We identify where we fail and get things wrong
And we look forward to the gift of a new start, a new life
In our hearts we follow the way that Jesus took.

Driven into the wilderness
Compelled to follow the Spirit's prompting Driven to wrestle with temptation
and the meaning of life
Communing with wild beasts
Waited on by angels
Newly affirmed by God
in the waters of baptism.
and forced to wait on the right time.
The right time to release the Good News and preach repentance.
The right time to acknowledge

the Kingdom of God is here.
May we be driven by the Spirit of God.

Reading **Luke 4:1-13**

When Jesus returned from the Jordan River, the power of the Holy Spirit was with him, and the Spirit led him into the desert. For forty days Jesus was tested by the devil, and during that time he went without eating. When it was all over, he was hungry.

The devil said to Jesus, "If you are God's Son, tell this stone to turn into bread."

Jesus answered, "The Scriptures say, 'No one can live only on food.' "

Then the devil led Jesus up to a high place and quickly showed him all the nations on earth. The devil said, "I will give all this power and glory to you. It has been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I want to. Just worship me, and you can have it all."

Jesus answered, "The Scriptures say:

Worship the Lord your God
and serve only him! "

Finally, the devil took Jesus to Jerusalem and had him stand on top of the temple. The devil said, "If you are God's Son, jump off. The Scriptures say:

'God will tell his angels to take care of you.

They will catch you in their arms,
and you will not hurt your feet on the stones.' "

Jesus answered, "The Scriptures also say, 'Don't try to test the Lord your God!' "

After the devil had finished testing Jesus in every way possible, he left him for a while.

Reflection

Some years ago, a colleague of mine told of his family holiday, a staycation if you will. The family spent a week in Scotland walking the Great Glen Way. Their boys were 12 and 13, and though they enjoyed the wide country and the accents and the Scottish breakfasts, the ten-mile walks over craggy terrain with only a ham sandwich and a Twix in their backpacks wore them thin.

On the third day, they set their sights on Drumnadrochit, nestled at the edge of Loch Ness, where the Glenurquhart Highland Games are held every August. However, by midday the youngsters were fatigued, complaining, trudging at a snail's pace. For hours, the older one had complained of foot pain, sharp stabs increasing to unbearable intensity. My colleague and his wife took turns hoisting this beast of a boy on their back and lugging him for as long as they could.

At one point they realised they had reached situation critical. It was 2 o'clock and though they actually had only an hour more to walk, Dad knew they were on the verge of mutiny. The two boys, dropped to the ground in exhaustion, would soon refuse to move another inch. On a previous stop in the village, Dad spied a small

sweetie shop tucked into an old stone row. He remembered the sign on the front door announcing the hours of operation: 9–5. Like all boys they loved sweets, and their eyes light up at the possibility of discovering a new shop with novel treats.

'Boys' my colleague said, 'I've got good news and bad news.' Groggily, they raised their eyes. 'Good news is there's a brilliant wee sweetie shop in Drumnadrochit.' A spark lit. 'Bad news is it closes at 3:30.'" Panic shot across their faces.

"Alright," said the elder boy, hopping up from the ground. "We've got to get moving." For the next hour, the boys prodded the family forward, asking every five or six minutes what time it was. The older boy even removed his torturous hiking shoes, walking the final half mile barefoot. It was a joy to watch them, relieved and wide-eyed, entering that shop filled with racks of jelly beans, mint humbugs, Hawick balls and shelves of chocolates. Priceless, however, was when they caught sight of the sign revealing the shop's actual closing time, their shock turning to laughter as they realized what they'd been had.

We could debate the morality of the story till the cows come home. But my colleague knew that unless he tapped into the boys' desire, into their appetite, they'd never make it. Their rabid hunger offered a gift because it led them forward, toward goodness. Their hunger showed them what they really wanted. It got the family moving.

Lent provides a 40-day season when we're invited to pay attention to our hunger, to those yearnings that move us toward healing and ultimately toward Easter's feasting. In Lent, we join Jesus in those disconcerting, isolating, ravishing weeks in the wilderness. Jesus, we're told, is "led by the Spirit" to be "tempted by the devil." Do any words disrupt our safe, tidy theology more than these? Would God do that to us? Would God lead us into harm's way?

Preparing for the rigorous temptation he will endure, Jesus doesn't eat a crumb for weeks. Throughout the Bible, fasting is what God's people do when they are desperate to become more aware of God's presence. Fasting is a way to use our body as a prayer. Isolated in the wild, Jesus fasts because he is a human with a body and needs to express his longing for the divine presence. He knows there is a spiritual capacity that only manifests when heart and body are joined in humility. Christian spirituality never stays as an idea in the mind but always moves into the body.

With belly growling and strength fading, Jesus refuses to gratify his natural impulses. He uses his gnawing hunger to place himself in a posture of attentiveness. Through his deprivation, Jesus connects to his deepest craving, awakens his most ravenous hunger: God. And Jesus will need all his spiritual alertness when the devil arrives in a fury of temptation. The devil assaults Jesus where he is most vulnerable, enticing him to satiate his needs in his own way.

But Jesus, attuned to his deep soul, knows his voracious hunger is for the Father above every other craving. Centred in this truth, Jesus' words pulse with conviction: it is written, One does not live by bread alone. Jesus knows with crystal clarity that the bread all humans truly want is God.

Traditionally Lent is a season of fasting, in solidarity with Jesus' own experience and in recognition that we too crave God above all else. While Lent often invites rigorous discipline, it need not be grim. We are fasting toward joy, Easter, life, hope. We simplify. We cut things loose. We go silent. But we do all this as we move in faith toward hope. We move toward God.

Alexander Schmemmann referred to fasting as holy therapy. Lent is an embodied way that we receive God's healing and return to the One who is good and true. We don't spurn food or take on some practice merely to prove our spiritual fervour. We do it because we're physical people who, every so often, need to use our bodies to pay attention to God, to be renewed in God. Our hunger pangs remind us of our truest hunger, prodding us toward what our soul craves most. Lent reminds us that we desire God—that we need God, if we are to truly live.

Prayer

Lent is not for the faint hearted. It demands that we, like Thomas, put our hand into the side of the crucified Christ. Lent is a journey towards the cross, a Journey of enlightenment. From wilderness to feast, from Desert to Oasis. It's an attempt to identify with the powerless and the suffering in the world.

Lent is not tidy. The days grow longer, the ground thaws, there's mud and dirt everywhere, and the windows need cleaning.

Lent is a journey. So at the end of Lent, we should expect to find ourselves somewhere different from where we started. Lent can be an opportunity to explore what is the nature of the promised Kingdom of God on Earth that's to be longed for.

A time to discern how we are called to work for it. No, Lent is not for the faint hearted.

Blessing

May we go now into the world, a new season, a new beginning,
a new colour to everything and share the news

in everything new, love comes first. May we live renewed by that love in the world.

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