

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/mjIwC5Ilrzo>

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.

Gathering meditation and a time of Silence

We ask for the presence of the Spirit and pray that the breath of life

Continues to caress this planet home.

May we grow into true understanding –

A deep understanding that inspires us to protect the tree on which we bloom,

May we turn inwards and stumble upon our true roots.

In the intertwining life forms of this exquisite planet.
Awaken in us a sense of who we truly are;
Tiny ephemeral blossoms on the Tree of Life.
Fill each of us with love for our true Self,
Which includes all the creatures and plants and landscapes of the world.
May the stars, give us their burning passion.
May Silence, give weight to our voice. Amen

Reading

From John Chapter 11

There was a certain man named Lazarus, who was sick. He and his sisters, Mary and Martha, were from the village of Bethany. Mary was the one who had anointed the feet of Jesus with perfume and dried his feet with her hair, and it was her brother Lazarus who was sick. The sisters sent this message to Jesus: "Rabbi, the one you love is sick." Jesus loved these three very much. Yet even after hearing that Lazarus was sick, he remained where he was staying for two more days. When Jesus arrived in Bethany, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days. Many people had come out to console Martha and Mary about their brother. When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went to meet him, while Mary stayed at home with the mourners. When she got to Jesus, Martha said, "If you had been here, my brother would never have died! Later when Mary got to Jesus, she too fell at his feet and said, "If you had been here, Lazarus never would have died." When Jesus saw her weeping, and the other mourners as well, he was troubled in spirit, moved by the deepest emotions. "Where have you laid him?" Jesus asked. "Come and see," they said. And Jesus wept. The people in the crowd began to remark, "See how much he loved him!"

Reflection

Compassion is a powerful tool in our work to protect the environment. We need compassion because it connects us personally to the issue and sustains us over the long haul. Some people misunderstand this point and say they don't want to feel compassion. They assume compassion will add to their own suffering, because they think it involves personally feeling the pain they see around them. This may happen especially when people contemplate the widespread destruction of our wildlife and the environment as a whole. 'This is too much,' they may say. 'I have enough problems of my own. I can't take on anymore.'

This reflects a misunderstanding of the nature of compassion. Compassion is what we feel when we focus on the person or animal who is suffering, not what we feel when we focus only on the suffering. What is the object of our compassion? It is the being who is suffering. If you take an animal or person as the object of your compassion, you will not be overwhelmed by their suffering. If your attention is not directed primarily at the suffering, you can focus on them, and on what you can do for them.

Imagine if something we value and treasure were to fall into a fire. We would not focus on the heat and the flames that were consuming it. Keenly feeling the object's value and wanting to protect it, we would focus on the object, and immediately use whatever we found at hand to try to save it from the fire. We would not agonize over how hot the fire was, or how sad the situation was, or sit there contemplating whether we really had the right tool. Nor would we focus on ourselves. Our concern to safeguard the object would prevent us from indulging in

any self-interested thoughts. We would just take in the information that we needed in order to resolve the situation, and act.

The point is to care so keenly for others that we give rise to courage and determination to relieve them of their suffering. That is compassion.

Another misunderstanding is that compassion is something we now lack, so we need to go out and get it from somewhere. When we are talking about compassion, we are not talking about something that is foreign to us, needing to be imported. Rather, compassion is inherent in every person, as an integral part of us throughout the day, every day. The fact that we have affection for our family members or pets is due to the compassion and love that already lie within us. Even our wish to tend the garden outside our window is an expression of love and caring. Compassion is not something new that we need to acquire and plant. It is a question only of nurturing the seeds we already have.

Confusion can arise due to certain similarities between compassion and attachment. Both involve a kind of caring, although in other ways they are radically different. Attachment is aimed at our own interests and involves caring about ourselves. Compassion is aimed at others' interests and has to do with caring for others.

This similarity is something we can make use of in our spiritual lives. Here is a simple example:

Let's say we have three pieces of fruit. If we eat them all ourself and do not share any with others, that is attachment or desire. It involves caring only for oneself. However, if we eat one and give the remaining two to others to enjoy, it can become compassion. Attachment or desire will have been transformed into caring for others. In this way, compassion is a sort of transfer of ourself to others.

It is true that we all have a certain measure of desire, or attachment, but we also have the ability to transform this into compassion. However, as an extreme form of attachment, the greed we were discussing earlier poses a serious obstacle to our cultivation of compassion. I hope it is clear by now how important it is for us to break the spell of greed that we have fallen under — and guard against its recurrence once the spell is broken.

To that end, we can actively heighten our awareness of our fundamental dependence on others and on the environment. As we recognize more and more clearly how deeply interdependent we all are on one another, our sense of closeness to others and to the earth can likewise deepen. A profound awareness of interdependence weakens our sense of separation and difference, and can ultimately eliminate it. This provides a powerful support for our efforts to transform attachment's caring about self into compassion's caring for the world.

Prayer

In God all things are reconciled and no estrangement is found: so we have hope, even when we can see no way beyond the present conflict.

The Spirit is the one who acts with power when human action fails. May we be forgiven and healed for our failure to find the way by ourselves, our human inability even to imagine forgiveness, our human preference for victory over reconciliation, and our perverse suspicion that even to see another point of view besides our own is to capitulate and lose face. May we help one another to seek our worth in love for each other and not in any imagined superiority of one over another.

The Spirit of Christ brings good even from great evil, is the Way for all people, and so we pray

in hope.

Blessing

In the love of God we go.
Into the world God loves, we travel;
into the places love calls, we journey;
towards the people God loves, we move;
into all the world, to every person, we go.
Let us take the love of God and may we have eyes to see the love that God has
already birthed there.

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