

## **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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You can find our Sunday worship here.

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

or on YouTube here.

<https://youtu.be/iRyjAzUA3Aw>

Join our Wednesday ZOOM meditation by signing up here.

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

Candle Lighting and opening meditation

We light this Candle to light our way as we journey to Jerusalem, the cross, and the tomb.

May it's light strengthen us where the road is hard, embolden us when our hearts lose courage, and bring hope as the road grows dark.

In our tradition the time of rest begins with the lighting of a candle. In this moment the stopping truly begins. To take a few breaths, to allow the mind to quieten. This is the beginning of sacred time.

The dust that shapes the journey - the cross that guides it - the colour that surrounds it - the light that fades through it - the word that foretells it - The wilderness that invites it-

This is Lent and into it's wilderness God calls us  
Come brothers and sisters - Christ is heading for Jerusalem  
There is a walking through where memory plays with meaning.  
Light borders darkness and a cross wrestles with a call.  
A walking through that colours faith purple.  
A royal road - a broken way- a lenten pilgrimage. Though all journeys lead  
to the cross, light is drawn to that moment where the apostles of love  
endure the darkness of a royal road, a broken way, a lenten pilgrimage.  
Through to life..

#### Reading Matthew 4; 1-11

The Holy Spirit led Jesus into the desert, so that the devil could test him. After Jesus had gone without eating for forty days and nights, he was very hungry. Then the devil came to him and said, "If you are God's Son, tell these stones to turn into bread." Jesus answered, "The Scriptures say: 'No one can live only on food. People need every word that God has spoken.' " Next, the devil took Jesus to the holy city and had him stand on the highest part of the temple. The devil said, "If you are God's Son, jump off. The Scriptures say: 'God will give his angels orders about you. They will catch you in their arms, and you won't hurt your feet on the stones.' " Jesus answered, "The Scriptures also say, 'Don't try to test the Lord your God!' " Finally, the devil took Jesus up on a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms on earth and their power. The devil said to him, "I will give all this to you, if you will bow down and worship me." Jesus answered, "Go away Satan! The Scriptures say: 'Worship the Lord your God and serve only him.' " Then the devil left Jesus, and angels came to help him.

#### Reflection

One of the hardest things to do in letting go is giving up the need to be something. The more positive our self-image, the more dangerous it is. The more pious it is, the more dangerous it is. And the most dangerous thing of all is to be a professional Christian. That's why it's always the Pharisees and scribes who kill Jesus, because they have to defend their theology — and in this theology there's no place for the reality of an incarnate Christ. If we're honest, we probably find it a bit disappointing that Jesus Christ came as a completely normal human being.

Letting go of the present means giving up our self-image, our titles, our public image. I think this is one of the many meanings of the First Commandment: 'You shall have no other gods before me.' What's at stake here are not just false images of God (which mostly serve our purposes), but also comfortable images of

ourselves. That's probably what the saints meant when they said: We have to move to the place of faith, to the place of self-forgetfulness, of nothingness.

When Carl Gustav Jung the Swiss psychologist was an old man, one of his disciples read John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*; and he asked Jung, 'What has your pilgrimage really been?' And Jung answered: 'My journey consisted in climbing down ten thousand ladders so that now at the end of my life I can extend the hand of friendship to this little clod of earth that I am.'

That's a free man. The word 'human' comes from the Latin *humus*, which means earth. Being human means acknowledging that we're made from the earth and will return to the earth. For a few years we dance around on the stage of life and have the chance to reflect a bit of God's glory. We are earth that has come to consciousness. If we discover this power in ourselves and know that we are God's creatures, that we come from God and return to God, that's enough. You can't grasp this with logic; even this sermon won't convince anyone that this is how it is. We have to experience it ourself, by going on the journey ourself and walking the path ourself.

This is exactly what Jesus does in the forty days in the wilderness: He goes to a place of emptiness. And it says: He fasted for forty days, meaning, he made himself empty. He stared down the demon who told him, 'You have to be successful.' And he answered, 'No, I don't need that.' When he stood on the pinnacle of the temple, he stared down the second who told him, 'You have to be on the right religious track.' And Jesus said: 'Get lost. I don't need this game.' Finally he met the demon who told him, 'You can do the will of God with the tools of power.' But the price of power is falling down before Satan.

We all have to start from the assumption that our path too leads into the wilderness and that we have to look exactly the same three demons in the eye: the need to be successful, the need to be righteous or religious, and the need to have power and get everything under control. Until we have stared down these three demons within us, there is no possibility of getting out of the wilderness and proclaiming the Way of Christ. Otherwise we'll always be proclaiming our own way.

We use the Gospel to enthrone ourselves, and then the inner and outer ways split apart. Christ calls all of us to take the path of the inner truth — and that means taking responsibility for *everything* that's in us: for what pleases us and for what we're ashamed of, for the rich person inside us and for the poor one.

Francis of Assisi called this, 'loving the leper within us.' If we love the poor one within us we'll discover that we have compassion 'outside' too, that there's room in us for others, for those who are different from us, for the least among our brothers and sisters.

Less really *is* more. If we have nothing to prove and nothing to protect, if we have in us a broad space big enough to embrace every part of our part of our own soul, we can be aware and open to receive the Christ. And Christ himself will lead us on this path.

### Prayer

How awed by the courage of people who live out what they say they believe; who follow through on the choices they have made, whatever the cost to themselves. For peace activists, and aid workers; mediators, and climate change campaigners, for home carers, street pastors, prison visitors, and all who steadfastly give of themselves for the sake of others, without looking for any glory or reward.

We offer our prayers for any people we know who have life-changing choices to make: for young people deciding on a career path; for those entering or leaving a relationship; for those seeking faith, or questioning it; for any of us at a crossroads in our lives; that we may take time to be sure that what we think is the right way to go is in line with the Way of Jesus

We pray for the church, throughout the world. The world has changed beyond all recognition, and we no longer seem to belong. May we see that as an opportunity to draw closer once again on the Way of Jesus, who never belonged, and who turned his back on all that others would have counted success. May we in our time and place, strengthened by his spirit follow him to the cross and whatever may lie beyond it.

### Blessing

Jesus was sent to the desert to be tested.  
As we begin this season of forty days

we too will enter the wilderness, we too will seek refuge in God.  
But be assured the Spirit goes with us sustaining and empowering our way.

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