

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/jxfYgC7FXiM>

Join our Wednesday ZOOM meditation by signing up here.

stmagnuszoom@gmail.com

Candle Lighting and opening meditation

All; Let there be light.

Wherever darkness is to be put to flight,

"Let there be light

**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.**

How do we breathe deeply, how do we look into each other's eyes, how do we say "no" to more and more demands we and others place upon us? May we face our alienation with each other and our world...and ourselves...so

that we catch a greater glimpse of what we might be and become for the honour and glory of our families and friends - our neighbours and of the divine in all men and women, in all creation; for honouring and celebrating women, for birthing and becoming in all forms.

To listen and to appreciate bird song in early morn, to see robins now flying from snow mound to branch...to behold moon light while walking in crisp, clear air...to listen to music that deeply moves our souls or makes us want to dance...or to cry. To watch a movie that stirs our deepest being...to enjoy time with soul mates - eating, drinking, sharing...being. To place cheek upon cheek - with a child, a lover, a parent, grand parent.

Whether in surrender or defiance, let how much it all matters pry us off dead centre, so that we are moved to tears, or sighs or screams, or smiles...or dreams....that we may be in touch with who we are and with each other and with all that is eternal, life giving and true. Amen. Let it be.

Reading

The Wisdom of Solomon 6 10-20

I speak, then, to you who hold power over the people, that you may learn wisdom and not be led astray. So give this your full attention: desire this lesson and you will learn it. Wisdom shines brightly and never fades. She is seen by those who love Her and is found by those who seek Her. She reveals herself to all who desire to know Her, and those who rise early to search for Her will not grow weary of the journey, for they will find Her seated at the door of their own homes. To ponder Her is the fullness of Wisdom and to be loyal in Her pursuit is the shortcut to freedom from care. She searches the far ends of the earth for those who are worthy of Her, and She appears to them on their daily path with kindness, meeting them halfway in all their journeys. The true meaning of Wisdom is the desire to learn, and to be passionate about learning is to love Her. In this way, the desire for Wisdom leads you to true sovereignty. If you who rule over people wish to keep your thrones and symbols of power, then honour Wisdom so that you may lead forever!

Reflection

"Why did God create Eve?"

Well, after creating Adam, She stepped back, scratched her head, and said, "I can do better than that."

What better topic for Mother's Day than the divine feminine. There has been a surge of interest in feminine imagery for God. Maybe this interest follows on naturally from the huge gains in gender equity in the world in recent decades. Or is there gender equity? It has been said that women will never be equal to men until they can walk down the street with a bald head and a beer gut, and still think, "Damn, I'm good looking!"

I think it's more likely that the surge in interest in the divine feminine parallels the surge of interest in earth-centred spirituality and people taking responsibility for their own spiritual life rather than being told by the church how to be spiritual.

In the book *The Color Purple*: one character, Celie says "When I found out that God was white and a man I lost interest." Celie was a poor, uneducated black woman, who was sexually abused by the man she believed to be her father. Celie is not alone. As long as Christianity emphasizes a white, male puppeteer God who favours the privileged, then many, many people will lose interest.

God is one of the names given to the mysterious source of Life. How could this be limited to male imagery and understanding? God is all and in all. This includes all living and non living matter, all gender and sexuality, all past and all future possibilities.

As long as religions and denominations argue over whose God is bigger and meaner, then people will lose interest in this God. When the divine feminine is suppressed for long enough, an unhealthy form of masculine God predominates, and the results are frightening.

As Jacqui Lewis pointed out we all have our projections. I know I do. Projection itself is not the problem. The problem occurs when we don't examine those projections with a critical eye, with a backdrop of suspicion. The issue is that we write laws that codify the shadow parts of the god we create, in order to diminish others, to abuse others. The trouble starts when our god is too small, when we reduce our worst projections to fit in our pocket and keep this god on our side. When we neglect to confront this created god, we get the Crusades and the Inquisition; the murder of indigenous people and Jews; apartheid and enslaved Africans; sexism, xenophobia, and homophobia—all in the name of the too-puny god that is the worst of ourselves.

In Hebrew, for example, the word for spirit is feminine: ruach. In Greek, the word pneuma [breath or spirit or soul] has a feminine article, the word Sophia stands for wisdom, and the word agape—God's love for us—is also a feminine word. Therefore will not that Sophia do anything for her creation? Her love is fierce. She weeps when we do and insists on justice. She is God. She is Love.

A rabbinical story tells of the moment Adam first opened his eyes:

Adam looked at creation, and said to God, "This is utterly fantastic!"

"I know", said God.

"But tell me", Adam asked, "what is the meaning of it all?"

God, taken aback, replied, "You mean it has to have meaning?"

"Of course", Adam answered.

"Well, I am sure you will think of something", God said, and sauntered off.

In biblical language, the search for meaning is Logos. It is an embodiment of enquiring, systematic, left brained, language driven meaning. In biblical language, wisdom is Sophia. It is one with the moment, unself-conscious, appropriate, right brained, dancing, mystery, love filled, skilful means.

Logos without Sophia is dry. It tends to be unfeeling and barren. It can be evangelical and ruthless, moralistic and judgmental.

Sophia without Logos is purposeless. It drifts without direction. It can be relativistic and wishy-washy.

They need each other. Of course, the Logos has been hugely overemphasized for centuries in Christianity, so we definitely need some more Sophia. But the ideal would be to bring back Logos and Sophia in harmony.

The feminine is rising at last, overflowing the banks of every landscape, from politics to religion, from the world of entertainment to the fields of peace and justice. She is unconditionally loving. She is shifting the global paradigm from one of dominance and individualised salvation to one of collective awakening and service to all beings.

The wisdom of Sophia, has been hidden in the heart of each of the great spiritual traditions: Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, Islam.

Access to these jewels has required excavation, but the treasures that have emerged are transfiguring the soul of the world, offering medicine for the broken heart of humanity and the materials needed to mend the torn fabric of the earth.

It is the Christian women mystics who are becoming much more recognised and appreciated as role models. The sixteenth-century Spanish mystic, Teresa of Ávila has shows us what it looks like to cultivate an intimacy with God in the verry centre of our being and also find ruach "living among the pots and pans." The medieval Rhineland visionary Hildegard of Bingen praises God's greening energy in every particle of creation, helping us to glimpse the face of the One in all that is. The English anchoress Julian of Norwich had a near death experience in which Christ revealed himself as an unconditionally loving Mother who continuously breaks herself open and pours herself out to her children, endlessly forgiving and enthusiastically adoring us. Through each of these wise women, we can come to recognize the holiness of incarnation. There is nothing in this amazing, messy world, not a thing in our own imperfect perfection, no place in the scope of the human predicament or the majesty of the natural world that is not, by its very nature, blessed: the chosen dwelling place of the One we love.

Prayer

The world touches us in so many ways. May we consider people near and far in some kind of desperation...parents struggling to manage a household and a marriage...those who have lost jobs, those with health and medical concerns, those depressed and despairing about life, those in war-torn lands where oppression is the language and esteem is absent.

May we consider all that is - the beautiful and that which we don't even want to read of and think about. May the joy and the terror of this present day move and jolt us to our greater selves and our greater thoughts. May our active considerations of all people move us to action and responses that help gentle this world into a more sane and humane place, where laughter can abound a little more, where smiles and trust and honesty can prevail.

We expose our fear where it shivers, where it crouches behind the curtains of pretence and propriety - so that we can face each other and laugh our way toward becoming more whole to each's greater being. May we embrace this day our choices, our chances and our creativity to be who we are. Help us this day to eat the fruit of knowledge and opportunity, knowing full well the delights and responsibilities that come with this primal, liberating and human inclination.

Blessing

May love, like unexpected fountains of flowers in the winter, fill our hearts with beauties for which nothing has prepared us. Our work in this life is to carve the stone of this very moment with the chisel of our love, our reason, our passion and our struggle, there to reveal the blossom that had been hidden inside all the while.

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