

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/2pBAh3zhu6g>

Join our Wednesday ZOOM meditation by signing up here.

stmagnuszoom@gmail.com

Candle Lighting and opening meditation

In this Easter Season of new life and new hope,
may the light of this candle remind us that light and life have the victory
over death and darkness.

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.

Nature's green wonder - Spring!

The meeting of God
in the arteries and veins of this world,
the point where the ordinary becomes otherness
and eternity breaks into the time-serving.
It is season of recurrent renewal
when green's myriad shades
woo us into imitating nature's creativity,
and love's dreams fortify us against
the souls' inevitable winters.
Like the petals of the flower we unfold,
Like the roots of the plants we draw life,
Like the leaves in the wind we dance and sing
And in it all we encounter the Christ.

Reading

Bible Reading: from John 20;

L; Until we can see ourselves in the words we read
and the stories we hear, it is easy
to remark on the rest of the world.

**All May the light of these words fall strong
upon each of us, that we can find the truth they reveal
in our own hearts this day**

In the evening of that same day, the first day of the week, the doors were locked in the room where the disciples were, for fear of the Temple authorities. Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." Having said this, the saviour showed them the marks of crucifixion. The disciples were filled with joy when they saw Jesus, who said to them again, "Peace be with you. As Abba God sent me, so I'm sending you." After saying this, Jesus breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone's sins, they are forgiven. On the eighth day, the disciples were once more in the room, and this time Thomas was with them. Despite the locked doors, Jesus came and stood before them, saying, "Peace be with you." Then, to Thomas, Jesus said, "Take your finger and examine my hands. Put your hand into my side. Don't persist in your unbelief, but believe!" Thomas said in response, "My Saviour and my God!" Jesus then said, "You've become a believer because you saw me. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed." Jesus performed many other signs as well—signs not recorded here—in the presence of the disciples. But these have been recorded to help you

believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Only Begotten, so that by believing you may have life in Jesus' Name.

Reflection

People read books, and in a curious way books sometimes read people. It happens when an author's insight leaps from the page making the reader declare, 'I believe that too but couldn't express it' or 'This book is about me!'

For me in my early twenties it was French 19th Century novelist Emile Zola. His fierce anger against false privilege and injustice matched my own growing political thoughts. Zola expressed them as I could not but they were already mine. In stories like 'La Terre' on the hardships of rural life, 'Germinal', on the brutality of a coal miners strike in northern France, with me reading it at a time of when in the UK similar events were unfolding in the early 80s. 'L'Assommoir' a study in poverty in working class Paris. These were seminal not only to my political development but also to my spiritual development, even though I would not necessarily recognise it at the time.

In terms of that spiritual understanding, something which came much later but with similar affirmation, focussed my latent thoughts about resurrection. In Reasonable Belief, twins Anthony and Richard Hanson had suggested that 'the main evidence for the resurrection as an actual event lies in the faith and behaviour of the earliest disciples.' That moves resurrection-thinking away from stones, tombs, permeable walls in upper rooms, and anonymous young men in white clothes, to the faith, behaviour, and thus the human experience of men and women. New Testament scholar C. H. Dodd also turned to the disciples for resurrection evidence. 'The darkness and desolation of Good Friday and the miserable Sabbath which followed had emptied life of all meaning. On the third day 'they were raised to life with Christ'; that is a confession of faith hardly less basic than the proclamation, 'Christ is risen'.'

Our understanding of 'resurrection' lies in human experience as well as in our grappling with biblical stories - critically important though they are - written in a time, context, and with literary methods no longer ours.

There is the lovely story of a writer caught in the utter emptiness of a mental block... writer's block, the terror of all authors, so I am told. But who slowly finds his imagination stirred, discovering a vision which he feels not only able but compelled to express. He tells of a married couple whose relationship, once rich and fulfilling, slowly dries up. These bones can never live again. Then a new relationship emerges, less superficially high-powered and less greedy than the old one, and with a new quality of life. That is resurrection. Many ministers have seen it happen and later shared in a re-dedication of a marriage, or the renewal of vows.

A marriage partner struggles through illness to eventual death. Will the effect on the remaining partner be bitterness; a feeling of total desolation? Bereavement can create a tomb of despair from which friends are impotent to draw the sufferer. Some remain entombed for the rest of their life. But not all. Indeed, not most. For the majority, life that has ebbed away begins to return. Inner and unsuspected resources are called out that offer the chance of a new beginning. It is not that 'time has healed'; nor is it mere stoicism. The truth is that life cannot be defeated by death, and resurrection is always possible because of the very nature of the life we have been granted us.

Such experiences affirm that resurrection is always the creative act of the Eternal Word and since that Word is spoken now in the common circumstances of life, there can be nobody who at some time or another has not been raised from the dead.

Does it belittle the momentous event of the resurrection of Jesus Christ to compare it to the resurgent feelings of a drained author, the rekindling of a tired marriage, or even our painful movement out of bereavement into new life? It does not. The depths of the ocean are not belittled when we paddle in its shallows. The first adolescent kiss does not belittle the full expression of human love. The greater gives promise to the lesser, and the lesser opens doors into an understanding of the greater.

To see commonplace experiences reflecting and interpreting events of 2000 years ago means that we are no longer spectators of resurrection, we are participants in an eternal drama. Resurrection was and resurrection is.

Prayer

If we showed Christ our hands,
would he find them nicked
from building a house
for the homeless;
or a callous on our thumb
from using the TV remote
too much?

If we showed him
our feet,
would he find them toughened
by walking the corridors
of a hospice
with the terminally ill;
or wrinkled
by too many hours
in the hot tub?

If we showed him
our hearts,
would he find them broken
over the struggles of
the lost, the little, the last, the least;
or would they be clogged
with the plaque
of our consumerised lives?

If we truly want to be the witnesses,
of the Christ of the empty grave,
would his Spirit show us
how?

Blessing

We need to remember that resurrection is
not just a mysterious event that once happened long ago.

We need to know - to live - the truth of resurrection
for ourselves, and for our world, daily.

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