

## **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/zBiqLI3IK4A>

Join our Wednesday ZOOM meditation by signing up here.

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

### **Candle Lighting and opening meditation**

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.

There are times  
often times  
when faith moves us  
from the shallow end of life  
to the deep end  
when the world urgently needs

a maturity of thought  
and a debate on our morals  
the compass of which  
seems to have gone off course  
and we feel we are losing our way

The deep end  
is a place where faith meets the world  
and offers a place  
for honest opinion  
beyond personality  
a sacred place  
where faith is real  
questions are hard  
and the asking of them  
imperative

Let us meet it here  
in worship

#### Reading Romans 12; 4-16

For as in one body we have many members and not all the members have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another. We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us: prophecy, in proportion to faith; ministry, in ministering; the teacher, in teaching; the encourager, in encouragement; the giver, in sincerity; the leader, in diligence; the compassionate, in cheerfulness. Let love be genuine; hate what is evil; hold fast to what is good; love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honour. Do not lag in zeal; be ardent in spirit; serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope; be patient in affliction; persevere in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints; pursue hospitality to strangers. Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. Rejoice with those who rejoice; weep with those who weep. Live in harmony with one another; do not be arrogant, but associate with the lowly.

## Reflection

Did you pick out the 'Z' word in the Romans reading..... *Zeal*, is a strange word. When it's used in everyday English, it means fervour -- enthusiasm.

But the word *zeal* entered the English language in the early fourteenth century, a period of intense religious warfare. Then *zeal* had two completely different meanings, the second of which is often extreme or fanatical as to a religious movement. The distinction is an important one. Of all the feelings common to religious passion, it's *zeal* that most divides the holy from the unholy. which means, as St. Benedict, the founder of the oldest strain of communal monasticism in the Western world, implies, there is such a thing as excess, which spoils religion. But the distinction between good *zeal* and fanaticism is clear:

Good *zeal* leads us to love more, to hurt less, to defend the defenceless, to bring justice to populations that are being oppressed, to love the *God* who created and loves us all. *All of us*. No exceptions. The good *zeal* includes caring for the stranger, listening to the needs of one another, immersing ourselves in prayer and reflection, caring for the earth, and saving the planet. It also means choosing common sense over extremism when, as the Benedict's Rule says, the choice is to 'pray in the fields' rather than risk lives to get back to the monastery in time for community prayer.

Fanaticism is self-aggrandizement posing as holiness by living the incidentals of religious devotion to the ultimate. Instead of fasting for a day, fanatics fast for a month, until weakness makes it impossible to actually live a really holy life. Or they set out to shame those whose morals they disapprove of. Like those religious groups who condemn alcoholics to starvation on Skid Row rather than accept alcoholism as a disease and get them help. Or condemn women sex workers for prostituting themselves to get the kind of money no other job will pay a woman.

Fanaticism pours ignominy and disdain on those who cannot keep up with the physical expectations of asceticism or the extremes of virtue.

Worse, fanaticism demands the kind of false obedience that specious religious leadership requires as proof of commitment to themselves. Then the obedience of free will which fanatics say *God* requires of us is turned into spiritual immaturity, and though it may not have evil intentions, it is never fully adult.

The fact is that fanaticism, excessive passion even for the good, has done as much harm in the world as it has done good. Fanaticism drove the Crusades. Fanaticism drove the Reformations. Fanaticism drove the Wars of Religion. Fanaticism is pseudo religion to an extreme. Fanaticism is Jim Jones, whose hundreds of disciples in Jonestown, Guyana, followed him to mass suicide in 1978. There is a point at which religion itself can become evil. But no part of evil -- for any cause whatsoever -- is holy. Fanaticism is again rearing it's ugly head across our communities and the world today.

That reality of evil zeal is clearly with us still. It is evident in the religious types of our own time who reject gay and transgender people.

The presence of God is as open to them as it is to anyone else, but instead they get labelled disordered by so-called religious figures around them. It is demonstrated by the Church's attitude toward girls who want to be priests but are disdained for believing that God might want them to follow Jesus, too. It's clear in religion that makes men God and women their servants.

Holiness, on the other hand, is a religious founder reminding his followers before he dies that religion can be as bad as anything else in life -- unless we are following religion in all its beneficence in order to become good ourselves. In these words we find hope, possibility, goodness, and God.

"Benedict writes: 'This, then, is the good zeal which members must foster with fervent love.: "They should each try to be the first to show respect to the other" supporting with the greatest patience one another's weaknesses of body or behaviour, and earnestly competing in obedience to one another. No one is to pursue what they judge better for themselves, but instead, what they judge better for someone else. Among themselves they show the pure love of sisters and brothers; to God, reverent love; to their Prioress or Abbot, unfeigned and humble love. Let them prefer nothing whatever to Christ, and may Christ bring us all together to everlasting life.'

The test of good zeal is a simple one: It is goodness after goodness so that life can be good for everyone because we have been here. It is Jesus ministering to the masses who were abandoned and rejected by the holiest professional figures of the Temple.

#### Prayer

Deafened as we are by different noises and voices,  
surrounded by different trends and fashions,

tempted by different modes or expressions,  
seduced by easy promises,  
we become cautious when we pray for the world.  
We do not assume any moral high ground for ourselves,  
but are conscious of our frailty and weakness.  
In Christ's name we want to build a better world.  
Our prayers are of love and support

We pray for those who tramp roughshod over the beliefs and practices  
of other people,  
those who are so absorbed in themselves they have neither time to learn  
from or patience with those who hold faith.  
We pray for those who in their antagonism,  
provoke and damage things of importance,  
for those who have no respect  
and no sense that everyone is of value and has worth,  
those who mock but offer nothing.  
We pray for those who try to find their own identity,  
who use different thoughts and language,  
for those who embrace other faiths  
and those who would bring them all together.  
We pray for the Church trying to understand where society has so  
dramatically changed its attitude,  
a Church torn between those who seek the security of the past  
and those who venture into new understanding.  
We pray that the Holy Spirit will lead the body of Christ  
into all wisdom and truth.

#### Blessing

May the Spirit show us where to go  
that we might meet the world's need,  
from the bounty of gifts and talents, stored in the treasure chest  
of the people the Spirit has made us to be

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

