

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/m3i47cRG1Yk>

Join our Wednesday ZOOM meditation by signing up here.

stmagnuszoom@gmail.com

Candle Lighting and opening meditation.

In our tradition the lighting of a candle is the beginning of sacred time. We've made it here for this faith celebration today, yet it is difficult to acclimatise to the stillness, quietness and to the giving and receiving of Christian love, amongst the noise of day to day life. There is so much going on. In our heads, in our hearts, outside these walls.

We know that we are loved, loved by the Creator God, the giver of everything. But in the busyness of our lives we can lose sight of the need to love ourselves and to accept the love of others, and to show kindness

to people throughout the world, through our thoughts, our deeds and our prayers.

Bring it all, bring everything that worries you, makes you feel helpless and also everything for which you give thanks. Bring it here. Breathe it in and then breathe it out as your prayer, in this place, at the start of our time together.

Reading Mark 12;

One of the religious scholars who had listened to them debating and had observed how well Jesus had answered them, now came up and put a question to him: "Which is the foremost of all the commandments?" Jesus replied, "This is the foremost: 'Hear, O Israel, God, our God, is one. You must love the Most High God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind and with all your strength.' The second is this: 'You must love your neighbour as yourself.' There is no commandment greater than these." The scholar said to Jesus, "Well spoken, Teacher! What you have said is true: the Most High is one and there is no other. To love God with all your heart, with all your understanding and strength, and to love your neighbour as yourself—this is far more important than any burnt offering or sacrifice." Jesus, seeing how wisely this scholar had spoken, said, "You are not far from the kingdom of God." And after that no one dared to ask Jesus any more questions...

Reflection

Jesus tells us what to do but like a good leader he does not tell us how to do it

It's up to us to work it out, sweat it out.

But I also know from experience that those people leading those movements for social change are often the minority. They are often mocked, ridiculed and marginalized by their own church communities. Likewise, for example, those men and women who stay late to clean the church are often left by themselves as the rest of the congregation hurries out the door towards Sunday picnics.

Yet, when the roll call is announced, we all-too-often want to claim those marginalized people as representing us, too. We all take pride in a clean church and in the acts of service done in our name by others.

We can read about the wondrous life of St. Francis and be convinced of his saintliness. But when Francis of Assisi knocks on the door, beckoning us to follow his example of intentional poverty and service, we refuse to open. When Martin Luther King, calls us to follow his path of nonviolent social change, we stall.

Yet, I bet if God were to hold the church accountable for following His Commandment, we would be the first to claim that the church clean-up crew, St. Francis and MLK were one of us! We'd pull them right out of the margins and push them to the front of the crowd and say, "You see! They belong with us, too!"

That is the scandal--the fact that the people who love abundantly are used as a cover for the rest of us.

You see, there are many places to run from the totally life-changing call of this Great Commandment. We have no shortage of places to wiggle out of it, deny, divert attention or claim that we are following the Commandment when we are not really heeding it much at all.

The way we handle saints is much like the way we treat the Greatest Commandment--which should not come as a surprise, as they are the closest living embodiments to that Commandment. We enshrine them and push them away in one brilliant, clever move.

Dorothy Day the social activist and editor of the Catholic Worker paper worked this out. She is famous for saying: "Don't call me a saint. I don't want to be dismissed so easily."

We either ignore the saints or we celebrate them. Both are devious ways of avoiding the task of actually being like them. Once someone has been made into a saint, we subtly put them into a category of "superhuman" and just keep them at arm's length. It's like the more we honour them the less we have to be like them!

Everybody loves St. Francis, but nobody wants to be St. Francis!

We love this belief stuff.

We aren't so fond of this action stuff.

Love is there. But it's not front and centre like Jesus told us it should be. That is the scandal.

And yes, love does factor into why we do what we do. Why we have social justice committees is to love our neighbour. Why we have beautiful worship services is because we love God. But when Jesus gives us the Commandment to follow, how often have we made that the number one priority?

We don't flat out deny Jesus' Commandment--we just mention it and then quietly push it off to the side to focus on something else.

We entertain the Greatest Commandment and nurture gentle embers. But why isn't it preached front and centre? Why isn't it preached as essential? Why isn't it preached as fundamental? It's like we kept the words of Scripture, but we have removed all its teeth.

The Greatest Commandment comes off like something we do on the side--and that's how we have ignored it. It's hiding in plain sight. We keep it--sure. We do a few good things in the name of love, of course. We honour many saints throughout history, hoping that their witness, by association, somehow gives credit and credibility to us.

If we had just tossed out the Commandment, it would have been a pretty obvious affront to Jesus. So we keep it, and we just sort of . . . ignore it. And we all benefit from ignoring it. We talk about it just enough to act like we have checked it off our list. But Jesus wants our enthusiastic "all in."

We put The Greatest Commandment in its golden cage: Right in the middle and completely neutralized, ignored and immobilized, like the poor elephant in the living room.

Prayer

Blessed are those who are merciful.....

Mercy: doesn't need to be pristine, nor need to be huge. It doesn't need to be protected, nor kept in a pot with a lid and a lock - and oh-so-carefully parcelled out to those deemed 'deserving'. And...Just a crumb will do.

Mercy: is not like pie, nor is it mealy-mouthed or stingy. It can't be measured,
cannot help itself cannot be contained. No matter how some try, still, it overflows
the tables of power and privilege, subversively escaping in scraps and crumbs
that are limitless, boundary-breaking and render tables irrelevant.
And...Just a crumb will do

Mercy: is subversive, spilling out for all, even those deemed (by some) as: 'undeserving', 'different', 'not one of us'. It re-draws the circle wider than the edges of our imagination. Just a crumb contains more than enough: more grace and love than we will ever need.
And...Just a crumb will do.

Blessing

Let us go into the week with faith.
Let us go forward into all that awaits in this week, with faith.
For the love of God is with us;
surrounds and upholds us.

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