

St Magnus Cathedral, Kirkwall

Scottish Charity SCO 05322/CCL No 119086

[St Magnus Cathedral Facebook page](#)

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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 on Facebook](#)

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

or [on YouTube here](#)

Join our Wednesday ZOOM meditation by signing up here.

stmagnuszoom@gmail.com

Candle Lighting and opening meditation

Let the light we kindle go before us,
Strong in hope,
wide in good will,
Inviting the day to come.

We worship with all the saints of every age. They challenge us, they encourage us, they inspire us. From the saints we learn that regular prayer nourishes the soul. From the saints we learn that the Christian life is nurtured in community. From the saints we learn that the Bible is worth

suffering and sacrifice. From the saints we learn that the life of faith is a wonderful adventure. May we pray faithfully; care compassionately; face the powerful joyfully; share in community selflessly; shed light in the dark places fearlessly; proclaim Christ gloriously! We are blessed, for the saints are with us! Amen

Reading Matthew 5:1-12

When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up on the mountainside, and after he sat down and the disciples had gathered around, Jesus began to teach them:

"Blessed are those who are poor in spirit:
the kingdom of heaven is theirs.

Blessed are those who are mourning:
they will be consoled.

Blessed are those who are gentle:
they will inherit the land.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for justice:
they will have their fill.

Blessed are those who show mercy to others:
they will be shown mercy.

Blessed are those whose hearts are clean:
they will see God.

Blessed are those who work for peace:
they will be called children of God.

Blessed are those who are persecuted
because of their struggle for justice:
the kingdom of heaven is theirs.

"You are fortunate when others insult you and persecute you, and utter every kind of slander against you because of me. Be glad and rejoice, for your reward in heaven is great; they persecuted the prophets before you in the very same way.

Reflection

As we come towards the end of the Church year we celebrate the feast of All Saints. It is important to emphasise from the beginning what we mean here by 'saints'. Normally we apply the word to people of extraordinary holiness who have been canonised or beatified by the Church. Among them each one has their favourites: St Francis of Assisi,

St Andrew, St Magnus and so on.

But today's celebration uses the word in a much wider sense. It refers to all those baptised Christians who have died and are now with God. It also certainly includes all non-Christians who lived a good life sincerely in accordance with the convictions of their conscience. We simply do not know how many people we are talking about but it must be a very large number.

Putting it the other way, there is no way we can decide which people have made an irrevocable choice of rejecting what is true and good and have chosen to be alienated from God. Hopefully, their number is much smaller.

The Gospel chosen for today's celebration is interesting. It gives us what we know as the Eight Beatitudes which form the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount. It is, in fact, a charter for holiness.

When many people think of holiness they think of keeping the Ten Commandments and perhaps some others like going to worship on Sundays or giving to charity. What we often tend to forget is that the Ten Commandments really belong to the Old Testament and are part of the Jewish law. Of course, they are still valid and Jesus said clearly that he had not come to abolish the Jewish law but to fulfil it.

We might say that the Beatitudes are an example of that fulfilling. The Beatitudes go far beyond the Ten Commandments in what

they expect of a follower of Christ and yet the sad thing is that one hears of relatively few Christians saying that they base their lives on the Beatitudes. And this is sad because it is clear from their position in Matthew's gospel that the Beatitudes have a central place. They are a kind of mission statement saying what kind of person the good Christian will be.

We need to clarify a few of the terms used. The word 'blessed' is sometimes translated 'happy'. It might be more accurate to translate it as 'fortunate'. In other words, people who have these qualities are really in an envious position. All of these beatitudes are indications that we belong to the 'kingdom of heaven'.

This is to be understood not as a place, still less as referring to life after death. It rather describes the kind of society that exists when we live according to these values - a place of truth and love, of compassion and justice, of peace, freedom and sharing, qualities which emanate from God himself.

The general message is that those are really blessed when they know their dependence on God and on their sisters and brothers; when they commit themselves totally to the Way that Christ invites them to follow.

This is the kind of Christian we are all called to be. It is these qualities which made the saints and which will make saints of us too. They go far beyond what is required by the Ten Commandments. If taken

literally, the commandments can be kept and not with great difficulty. Many of them are expressed in the negative, "You shall NOT..." so we can observe them by doing nothing at all! "I have not killed anyone... I have not committed adultery... I have not stolen..." Does that make me a saint?

Being a Christian is a lot more than not doing things which are wrong. The Beatitudes are expressed in positive terms. They also express not just actions but attitudes. In a way, they can never be fully observed. No matter how well I try to observe them, I can always go further. They leave no room for smugness, the kind of smugness the Pharisees had in keeping the Law. The Beatitudes are a true and reliable recipe for sainthood.

Prayer

We notice the saints around us, they have time for their friends and their family members.

'your will be done on earth O lord.

We notice the saints around us, they see a neighbour in need, and they are ready to meet that need.

'your will be done on earth O lord.

We notice the saints around us, they are aware of an injustice in the local community, or beyond this nation, and they find a way to bring change.

'your will be done on earth O lord.

We notice the saints around us, they have a strong faith, and are ready to nourish their faith in Christian community.

'your will be done on earth O lord.

The qualities of sainthood are within our grasp: we have the ability, we have the opportunity.

'your will be done on earth O lord.

May we strive to develop and to use those qualities of the saints that we dimly recognize.

'your will be done on earth O Lord.'

Blessing

As we go bravely into the world.
May our hearts be open to deeper questions.
May God's questions challenge us, guide us, and help us
to find ultimate meaning, and our true calling.

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