***[St Magnus Cathedral](http://www.stmagnus.org/), Kirkwall***

Scottish Charity SCO 05322/CCL No 119086

[St Magnus Cathedral Facebook page](http://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 on Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/StMagnusCathedralCongregation/)

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

or [on YouTube here](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC33Y1gSZlUBz5bIKrrx2rRQ)

Join our Wednesday ZOOM meditation by signing up here. [stmagnuszoom@gmail.com](mailto:stmagnuszoom@gmail.com)

Candle Lighting and opening meditation

We light this Candle to light our way as we journey to Jerusalem, the cross, and the tomb.  
May it's light strengthen us where the road is hard, embolden us when our hearts lose courage, and bring hope as the road grows dark.

As we remember and share stories of faith,  
let us rejoice in the presence of God.  
 Before our stories began, there was God;  
through all our days, God walks with us. God’s creative presence is moving among us. Let us dance with the God who frees us for new possibilities..

Jesus invites us to a way of celebration,  
meeting and feasting with the humble and poor.  
Let us walk his way with joy.

Jesus beckons us to a way of risk,  
letting go of our security.  
 Let us walk his way with justice.

Jesus challenges us to listen to the voices  
of those who have nothing to lose.  
Let us walk his way with peace

Jesus points us to a way of self-giving,  
where power and status are overturned.  
Let us walk his way with courage.

Jesus calls us to follow the way of the cross,  
where despair is transformed by the promise of new life.  
 Let us walk his way with faith.

Reading

from Matthew 18

Peter came up and asked Jesus, “When a sister or brother wrongs me, how many times must I forgive? Seven times?” “No,” Jesus replied, “not seven times; I tell you seventy times seven. And here’s why. “The kingdom of heaven is like a ruler who decided to settle accounts with the royal officials. When the audit was begun, one was brought in who owed tens of millions of dollars. As the debtor had no way of paying, the ruler ordered this official to be sold, along with family and property, in payment of the debt. “At this, the official bowed down in homage and said, ‘I beg you, your highness, be patient with me and I will pay you back in full!’ Moved with pity, the ruler let the official go and wrote off the debt. “Then that same official went out and met a colleague who owed the official twenty dollars. The official seized and throttled this debtor with the demand, ‘Pay back what you owe me!’ “The debtor dropped to the ground and began to plead, ‘Just give me time and I will pay you back in full!’ But the official would hear none of it, and instead had the colleague put in debtor’s prison until the money was paid. “When the other officials saw what had happened, they were deeply grieved and went to the ruler, reporting the entire incident. The ruler sent for the official and said, ‘You worthless wretch! I cancelled your entire debt when you pleaded with me. Should you not have dealt mercifully with your colleague, as I dealt with you?’ Then in anger, the ruler handed the official over to be tortured until the debt had been paid in full. “My Abba in heaven will treat you exactly the same way unless you truly forgive your sisters and brothers from your hearts.”

Reflection

**So much of our Lenten disciplines have revolved around ‘what are you giving up for Lent.’ That rather negative approach has always seemed to me to be a bit skewed from what we call ‘the GOOD news of the gospel’. More positive surely is to ask ‘what are you going to do extra, more of, up your levels of…. For Lent’.**

**Our story today is a great example of how Jesus encourages us to up our Levels of Forgiveness.**

I've come to understand what Gandhi said about forgiveness. He described it as 'the ornament of the brave.' It takes courage and great strength to forgive. It might even be the hardest thing you ever do, but it will bring a new sense of liberation that nothing else could ever touch.

One common misconception about forgiveness concerns how long it takes. 'Is it a one-time thing?' people would ask. 'Do you do it and then it's done?' There's no one answer to this, of course, since the process varies from person to person. Far from being a single, earth-shattering accomplishment with an end point, forgiveness is more like a regular habit or practice, like being optimistic or mindful or patient. Sure, when it comes to forgiving someone for spilling their coffee on you at Starbucks, it might be over in a moment. But for the bone-rattling, soul-injuring wounds for which forgiveness is most important, it is a process that ebbs and flows, one that may feel complete one day and begin yet again the next.

One especially thorny issue for many is this: Does forgiveness require reconciliation? And does it imply that you must feel warm and fuzzy and loving toward your former enemy? Researchers and therapists are divided on this, with some saying that neutrality is sufficient, while others argue that forgiving must literally mean loving your enemies. From a certain perspective, both views are true. Neutrality, after all, allows someone to live peacefully, and it allows the forgiver to live peacefully, too. Neutrality in a way is its own category of love. When you're neutral, you're doing no harm and you're letting someone be. And letting someone be, free of your judgments or blame or rage, implies a certain level of respect, an acceptance that that person, whoever she may be and whatever she may have done, is worthy of being here, on this brutal and beautiful planet, just like you are. Isn't that love?

Accepting someone's intrinsic human worthiness, even when you may not like the person or want to spend holidays with them, certainly dovetails with the concept of agape, the type of love that in ancient Greek referred to a love extended to all people, whether strangers or family members. The Greek word was translated into Latin as caritas, the origin of the English word 'charity.' In Buddhism, the idea of metta, or 'universal loving-kindness,' is similar to agape.

For practical purposes, think about forgiveness as containing levels. We have all heard tales fo extraordinary feats of forgiveness, from the Northern Ireland Troubles or Rwandan genocide or mothers forgiving the murderers of their children. And we are awed by each of them. But we also wonder: Is it necessary for everyone to take this process so far? To not only forgive but also reconcile and even befriend an offender?

People should never force forgiveness or even attempt it if they're not ready, much less reach out to whomever hurt them to reconcile. But there is also a deeper truth. The Jewish philosopher Maimonides said there were levels of giving. Well, so it is with forgiveness. The highest level of forgiveness just might be reconciliation, and even the kind of love one feels for a family member or cherished friend.

For those heroes of forgiveness - forgiving merely as a gift to yourself, a way to unburden yourself of pain, is a lower level of forgiveness. 'It keeps you separated in two worlds,' one such person from Rwanda said. 'I live in my world and you live in yours, with a wall between. True forgiveness means restoring relationship, recognizing that it is one world. That is what allows us to pool resources and work together. Until we can all recognize our common humanity, not live as right and wrong or black and white or Rwandan and Congolese, but as humans who share so much – there will not be peace. Forgiveness is a personal process. It's heart to heart, person to person. But on a broader global level, you can't have reconciliation without forgiveness.'

Prayer

May the Spirit of Jesus whose touchstone

is the desert and the cross,

be with us as we journey through the weeks of Lent.

Lead us into the wilderness

so that we may be driven

to see, hear and depend on her.

May we see her in the faces of those who are in need…..

the fragile, the lonely and vulnerable

and those who are always there to support and care for them.

May they feel her presence

walking with them.

May we see her in the faces of those who are without hope…..

the homeless and unemployed,

those who will go hungry and thirsty today

and those who work selflessly to support and care for them.

May they feel her love

enfolding them.

May we hear her in the voices raised in grief and despair ….

the sick in body and mind,

the dying and the bereaved,

and in the comforting words

of those who support and care for them.

May they feel her compassion encircling them.

May we see and hear her in a world that struggles

with war, poverty and injustice;

in those who are victims of oppression and exploitation,

and those who work tirelessly to bring peace, justice and equality

to the nations.

May they depend on her truth and faithfulness

to make the kingdom come.

We are invited to meet Christ

in barren, lonely places where we will be tested.

May we have the strength and resolve

to bring comfort, support and love

to others …in their wilderness moments.

Blessing

Let us go out to our daily journey through life.  
As we do, may we fashion relationships of inclusion  
and reconciliation, and a life-style that loves  
and treats people and the earth gently, as God does.

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