

## **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.

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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](mailto:stmagnuszoom@gmail.com)

Candle Lighting and opening meditation

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

We know the story of this week so well. Too well maybe, for it to really impact on how we will bear witness to our beliefs in the days ahead. We hunger for the resurrection of our faith as we travel from celebrations full of hope and joy, through supper with friends, betrayal, the shameful

and agonising death of the Teacher who has, through his own sacrifice, taught the world of Gods 'everlasting love for over two thousand years. The devastating loss of purpose for his faithful followers. The overwhelming need to be together in sorrow as well as in joy.

*The deeper that sorrow carves into your being, the more joy you can contain.*

May we be courageous enough to live this Holy Week in joy and sorrow, praise and pain, wonder and weeping, allowing ourselves to walk with the disciples that Christ called to follow him to Calvary, to the very foot of the Cross. We know that Love endures forever. May our journey this week into that Love prepare us to be overwhelmed by it, yet again.

Amen.

Reading Psalm 118, 1-2, 19-29

I thank you, YHWH, for your goodness!  
Your love is everlasting!  
Let Israel say it: "Your love is everlasting!"  
Open the gates of justice for me,  
let me come in and thank you, YHWH!  
This is the gate of YHWH,  
and only the upright can enter! Thank you for hearing me,  
for saving me. It was the stone which the builders rejected  
that became the keystone; this is YHWH's doing,  
and it is wonderful to see.  
This is the day YHWH has made—let us celebrate with joy!  
Please, YHWH, please save us! Please, YHWH, give us prosperity now!  
Blessings on the one who comes in the name of YHWH!  
We bless you from YHWH's temple!  
YHWH is God and God has enlightened us.  
Join the festal procession!  
With palm fronds in hand, go up to the horns of the altar!  
You are my God, and I thank you;  
You are my God, and I exalt you.  
Thank You for hearing me, for saving me.  
Thank you, YHWH, for your goodness!  
Your love is everlasting!

## Reflection

For this reflection I am leaping ahead by four days, from the joyous entry of Christ riding into Jerusalem, his way on that Sunday over palms thrown by excited crowds, to the Last Supper on Thursday. Surrounded by his disciples on both occasions, as we assume he was for the whole week, there must still have been an almost unbelievable, upbeat feeling of expectation, that this was indeed Christ's time.

A reflection on the Last Supper - the food-related event at the heart of our Christian faith - must surely be a good subject for a cook-cum-worship-leader-trainee to talk about. But there is honestly little enough in the Bible for me to be able to say "This is what they ate and this is how they prepared and cooked it". But it has been fun trying to work out what it might have been like.

The Passover is referred to 71 times in the Bible, and of course Jesus is referred to as our Passover Lamb. But the Last Supper, which we celebrate in Communion, is said to be a Passover meal in the Synoptic Gospels but not in John, upon whose writing Leonardo da Vinci based his famous painting. John maintains that the authorities would have wanted Jesus dead and buried before the Passover. Digging a little deeper into history, even Biblical history, is often more confusing than helpful. But one thing that is certainly right in Leonardos' painting of the Last Supper is the lack of cutlery: spoons and knives were in use in Jesus' time but forks, other than twigs, were not widely introduced to the Middle East until about 400AD.

There are many biblical references to being 'at meat' but were there spices as well as bitter herbs as specified in Exodus when the Passover meal is described in great detail? And was there salad? Much of the Bible was written by men who generally don't enjoy salads as much as women: did they have salads but the writers just didn't bother to record them? And humus - surely there would have been humus or some other kind of bean bash? Cynthia Shafer-Elliott in the States, a scholar of ancient Hebrew food, maintains that in Biblical times meat would have been out of the question as anything other than a treat or celebration for most people, and that much of the diet would have been stews made of

pulses like chickpeas or lentils, and vegetables, served with bread. Indeed she asks if 'daily bread' should be rewritten to 'daily stew, or bean stew, and bread'? What goes around comes around - this is exactly the sort of eating that we are all being encouraged to embrace more regularly to help mitigate climate change. More beans, less meat. Or better meat, like our Orkney beef and lamb and not factory meat.

Let's go back to salad. Middle Eastern restaurants often serve salads as large bowls of flat leafed parsley, coriander and mint leaves, sometimes with pomegranate, raw onion and currants, dressed with olive oil. Delicious - and very likely exactly the sort of salad that would have been served from earliest times. It is certainly salad that is good with lamb.

The bread of the Bible may indeed have more ties to Orkney than we realise. Liz Ashworth, who wrote *The Little Book of Bere*, says that grains of beremeal from approximately 8,000 BC have been found around the Sea of Galilee. It is thought that as populations spread out from the Fertile Crescent, early farmers took seed crops with them to sow in new places. Thus, over many years, bere eventually made its way to Orkney. A very similar grain is grown still in Tibet. Barley has little gluten so makes a dense, flat bread, although even in Biblical times different grains were mixed for breads, presumably to make a lighter loaf. What we think of as a trendy habit of dipping bread into olive oil may then have been a way of making it softer and more edible.

Marks' gospel relates how Jesus went to Simon and Andrew's house with James and John, where Simon's mother-in-law was ill in bed with a fever. Jesus was able to cure her of the fever and, the passage says, she got up and immediately began to serve them. Part of me wants to shout that she was possibly still feeling awful but had to get up, look after them, and probably cook for them. But was that part of the miracle, that she was instantly better enough to do so? At the Last Supper it was all men - as far as we know - and they had to get the cooking done themselves before sharing the meal together.

Sharing food is one of the things that defines our humanity. Other species will eat peacefully together if there is enough food, but will fight over what is there if it is not sufficient for them all. That is the reason why the image of taking bread, breaking it and sharing it is so very powerful. It is also why images of refugees and victims of wars looting food shops and fighting over food aid as it is delivered are so disturbing

yet understandable. In a world of abundance and yet so much waste we should be able to share more justly and fairly.

The shared bread and cup of the Last Supper are such a powerful reminder of sacrifice and generosity, the Communion experienced with Christians around the world, sharing with them our faith and our thankfulness for all that is good, just and hopeful, and our redemption through Christ.

I want to think of Jesus and the disciples at the Last Supper opening up pitta breads and filling them with tender pieces of roast, spiced lamb, some beautiful herb salad and some chick peas bashed into a sort of humus with olive oil and garlic, which are mentioned in the Bible a lot. I want it to have been that sort of convivial food, a relaxed meal that the disciples would remember forever, as we do. Eaten together before they sang songs of praise, and walked out to the Mount of Olives. But however it was served, The Last Supper will always be the most significant refreshment and celebration of Christian life. Especially today as we contextualise it, remembering that it came between occasions of great optimism and deep despair, and that it was the beginning of the redemption of us all.

#### Prayer

God of Love, we thank you for the cycle of Christian worship that reminds us of the cornerstones of our faith. Amidst the hustle and bustle of modern life it is so easy for us to be too full-on to walk with Christ, to live our faith as fully as we live our busy lives, or to pause to reflect on what we believe. We thank you that we are here today, sharing our faith journey and supported in our doubts and certainties by those here with us. We thank you for all who come here regularly or can only come occasionally, and those who join us on holiday.

Amidst the criss-crossed currant buns, the chocolate eggs and ordering of festive roasts we have the opportunity to live this Holy Week openly and in safety. We pray for Christians everywhere who must hide their faith, worshipping in secret. For those who have seen their churches destroyed, their ministers killed and their holy places desecrated. For people of all religions who suffer oppression because of their beliefs. We pray for religious freedom and tolerance.

Mother God, the earth is stirring with new life and hope. As we welcome the longer days and greater light, may that light illuminate the cobwebs obscuring the reawakening and nurturing of our faith, and make us brush them aside. May we see clearly that Christ is as much the cornerstone of all that is true, just and good in our society today as He has been for millennia. May we travel from the Hossanah of today, through the meal that underpins our faith to the despair and grief of the Cross, so that we may truly be prepared for the resurrection of our faith to new life. Amen.

### Blessing

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