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“As thy days are, so shall thy strength be”

A Pastoral Letter to the congregations and communities of Wick, Monkash, Marcross

My friends in Christ,

Our Church, our community, our nation and our world, is going through a very new and challenging experience as you are more than aware. As I have said to a number of you, we may hopefully not have been infected by Covid-19 but we have most certainly ingested the stress of it. I am no doctor or scientist, but I feel that this virus has had the capability not only to threaten the lives of each one of us, particularly the vulnerable, but also to isolate and distance one another when there is so much loneliness in our society.

We will see this more than ever this weekend on Mothering Sunday when we find that we must make a wise and responsible decision as to whether we should be meeting with those who we raised or were reared by or not.

As I write this letter from the perspective of a son and a father, that word ‘mothering’ calls to mind someone who looks out for our interests, defend us, protect us; someone who stands with us in our times of greatest suffering.

I saw that this week in our communities. Firstly, at our Church School in Wick and other schools in the benefice who are working tirelessly to meet the fresh challenges that they face in ensuring that children who are in a vulnerable position and those classed as children of essential workers are cared for in school and continue to reach their God-given potential alongside those isolated at home with their families.

Secondly, the new ways of communication used to keep in touch alongside the offers of doing little things that can really make a difference to someone’s life. A demonstration that their well-being is paramount and that we cannot just walk away from each other. Talk about being the Salt of the earth and the light of the world. We pray with thanks, for all their efforts, mindful always of the fears and sacrifice that they face like us all.

Yet, out of this season of suffering, tragedy and crisis, can and will come new and life-giving ways of creating family and community, just as Jesus did from the cross when he asked his mother and his best friend, John, to care for each other when he had gone. That sense of God's loving presence and attentiveness, and the strength and resilience and fortitude that new family needed to survive an uncertain future.

None of us knows what tomorrow might bring but remember we are not given a faith that just sustains us when everything falls into place. We are given a faith that sustains us when all hell seems to be breaking loose. Our familiar church buildings might not be leading public worship, but they remain open to be a place of spiritual sustenance and comfort through prayer and reflection.

To conclude, I share with you a very private, personal and comforting sentence of scripture that draws me back to the root of my faith in uncertain times of doubt and fear.

“As thy days are, so shall thy strength be” that means the tougher the day, the greater the strength.

We all will face tough and challenging times ahead. As God's holy people we will evidently feel the pain of our community, our nation and our world's suffering. We may find ourselves sacrificing something of ourselves in order to show God's love to the new families being created in our villages and town.

May God bless you in all your efforts. Be assured of God's love and care, and may he strengthen you in the days ahead.

Hold onto your faith. Hold on to God.

Yours in Christ,

Fr Craig

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