Letter to all the Children, Parents & Staff

I want to wish you and all your families and friends a very ‘Happy and Blessed Easter’. I pray you are looking after each other and keeping safe. There must have been times over the last few weeks when there was great joy, laughter and enjoying all this free time. Then other days there must been moments when you wanted to shout, scream and run away somewhere on your own, but that may always not be possible. These days are strange and challenging. Watching the News can be hugely upsetting these days with the Covid 19 Virus, it is difficult coming to terms with the reality of today. That’s why we all have to be positive! Think positively and act positively!

Of course it can be easy for us to lose hope, and for our faith to go through shaky patches. With so much suffering in the world, it is no wonder that we sometimes ask the question: ***where is God in all of this?***

But in last Sunday’s Gospel, Jesus reminded the apostles of the importance of their faith. St Thomas represents all of us. He was expressing the doubt and voicing the uncertainties which test our faith from time to time. Faith does not always come easily. Sometimes, believing is not a problem, but at times it can be a real challenge.

It is worth remembering that the faith of the apostles was no overnight experience. It was something gradual, which increased as they became more intimate with Jesus; the same is true of our faith. It will grow and deepen, provided we pray and have contact with Jesus. This is more evident today than ever before.

In our prayers and thoughts we think of the P4 pupils who would be receiving their First Communion here in St Joseph’s and the P7 pupils who would be receiving the Sacrament of Confirmation from Bishop John in St Mirin’s Cathedral, in Paisley. Followed by the parties, the family get together’s and the Masses of Thanksgiving. Once this virus is finished we will be able to celebrate these days of faith and so much more!

When the unknown events are all around, we can be like Thomas. We are all at sea, afraid of what the future will bring. But Jesus wants us to have courage. What is Courage? it is believing in yourself, Courage is having the strength to believe in something. Courage is never giving up your dream.

Well, there was a wee boy called Iqbal, who was born in Pakistan. He was sold at the age of 4 to a rug carpet company for 12 dollars to tie knots in rugs. He was chained to the bench. He was given no food or water, so he could stay small to keep tying knots. There was no light and any mistakes he was beaten and place in a torture room. At the age of 10 he escaped. His dream was to become the Abraham Lincoln in his country. He wanted to free all the children – to let them have a chance and go to school.

So he started going around his country and declaring a verbal war against the carpet rug industry. He stood up for all the children who did not have a voice and people listened. He started speaking out in Pakistan, abroad and when he came to America, he struck a chord with many people. But the rug bosses lost lots of money, once Iqbal started speaking out, and he was in danger when he went home.

When he came to a classroom in America – he told the children – Give what you can - do anything to raise awareness. Children can do something for others. He asked if the children here could help the children in Pakistan. He was asked when he visited the school – what are you going to do when you go home, knowing your life will be in danger. He replied – I need to finish what I started. I am going to finish what I started!’ When he went home that Easter Sunday, he was shot outside his grandmother’s house.

He was shot and killed, and this is when the children of this world became angry. BUT instead of being angry about it – a group of children from that school decided to do something. They planned to build a school in Pakistan – that is what Iqbal dreamt of, that’s what he wanted for the children of Pakistan. But they were taught that children were to be seen and not heard. The children from the American school had to prove they could do it. They drafted an email to all the local schools asking for 12 dollars from each class. Iqbal was sold for 12 dollars and died at the age of 12. So 12 dollars was significant. Within a year and a half they raised £250,000 dollars.

In the 10 years after Iqbal’s death, ‘A School for Iqbal’ had raised money to build 8 schools in countries across the world. This had made a lasting effect on many of the pupils – for some – they will never forget, Iqbal became the most courageous person in their lives. Others said they would have passed all their exams, but would never have reached out to others and that’s what matters more in life. He was a bright light – he knew what needed to be done and he did it. Not giving up – and that’s what courage is all about – not giving up, but putting one foot in front of the other – get out there and do it! Everybody can be courageous like IQBAL MASIH

In these days of lockdown. Try hard to stay positive. Believe in yourself, believe in your family. Believe in God and don’t forget to say your prayers in the morning and night – Thanking him for all we have.

Jesus greets his disciples with the simple blessing: ‘Peace be with you.’ Calming their troubled hearts. As we continue to celebrate the season of Easter, let us pray that our faith in Jesus will continue to grow. May God bless and protect you all

With Easter blessings.

Father Stephen