

Dear sisters and brothers in the parish of Our Lady in the Faroe Islands, it is Father Peter speaking to you through the kindness of our Deacon, Christian.

I was supposed to celebrate this Mass with you, but last Sunday's flight from Copenhagen was cancelled because of the weather, so I came on Wednesday and I have to stay in quarantine for three more days.

Here you are used to praying and worshipping when no priest can be with you, so I am sure you will have a worthy service in Mariukirkjan today. It is the Second Sunday in Lent, and today's readings present the mysterious way God tested Abraham, our father in faith, the incredibly strong hope Saint Paul had, and the amazing gift God gave Peter, James and John when they had the privilege of seeing who Jesus really is; the tradition of the Church is that God wanted to strengthen their faith for the terrible days to come, when Jesus would be put on trial and executed on the Cross.

Every year, the Pope sends us a message for Lent. This year, he concentrated on the three pillars of our Christian religion: the virtues of faith, hope and love. I want to share with you one sentence from his message on each of these things:

- Talking about faith, Pope Francis says: "In this Lenten season, accepting and living the truth revealed in Christ means, first of all, opening our hearts to God's word, which the Church passes on from generation to generation.... Lent is a time for believing, for welcoming God into our lives and allowing Him to *make his dwelling* among us."
- Talking about love, the Pope says: "Love rejoices in seeing others grow. Hence it suffers when others are anguished, lonely, sick, homeless, despised or in need. Love is a leap of the heart. It brings us out of ourselves and creates bonds of sharing and communion."
- I think his most helpful words come when he writes about about hope. He suggests: "In Lent, may we be increasingly concerned with 'speaking words of comfort, strength, consolation and encouragement, and not words that demean, sadden, anger or show scorn'. In order to give hope to others, it is sometimes enough simply to be kind, to be 'willing to set everything else aside in order to show interest, to give the gift of a smile, to speak a word of encouragement, to listen amid general indifference'."

As Christians, we try to live by the three virtues of faith, hope and love, but we hear very little about hope. *Faith*: I guess we know what we believe and we say so in the Creed at Mass every Sunday. *Love*: many of the stories we hear from the Gospel encourage us to love God and to love our neighbour. We hear and speak less frequently about *Hope*, so I am glad we have those words of encouragement from Pope Francis.

I am also glad Saint Paul spoke so strongly about hope in today's second reading, when he said: "With God on our side, who can be against us?" It is so encouraging to hear those words. We need that encouragement. We always need it, but perhaps we can repeat those words in our minds in the difficult periods in our lives, when many things seem to go wrong. They are ideal words for people who are afraid in the Corona virus pandemic, which seems to be coming slowly under control. In the Faroes, some things have had to change, but it has been much worse in Denmark, in Belgium, in Italy and in Great Britain. Please thank God the government has acted so wisely here, and pray for people in other countries who have been affected much more.