

St Andrew's Day message from Richard Leonard

We mark this year's St Andrew's Day, in circumstances that just a year ago were utterly unimaginable.

With the tragic loss of so many lives, ill-health and so much hardship, this year Scotland's national day will be more one of remembrance of those who we have lost, rather than the traditional celebration.

Necessarily, any festivities, will not take place in their usual form due to Covid public health restrictions.

I send my St Andrew's Day greetings to all, to those who are marking the day in their own way.

Whether that's through online events, making extra time to talk to family and friends, or simply a time for contemplation, I send my heartfelt good wishes to all.

Today's St Andrew's Day will be one more for reflection and remembrance than those of previous years.

To remember those who were sadly taken from us during this pandemic and to think of those bereaved family and friends, as well as what support we can offer to them.

We can use St Andrew's Day to give thanks for the heroic work done by those in our emergency services, during nine months of a public health crisis.

The medics and paramedics and the NHS team who put their lives on the line to treat those afflicted by this dreadful virus.

Those care home workers, who at great risk to themselves and their own families, have been caring for some of the most vulnerable and frail of our citizens.

And many other workers, who have quite rightly been lionised for their heroics, who are on their knees after working shift after shift with little respite, but will now have their pay frozen by the Chancellor.

And if that wasn't bad enough Rishi Sunak's decision to cut overseas aid and so cut support to the world's poorest and deny an increase in the living wage to the poorest in this country will simply spread poverty and deepen inequality.

On this St Andrew's Day, it is time to think of the sort of society we'd like to build in the post pandemic world.

We can choose to reject a mean-spirited approach to government, that denies workers a 'Real Living Wage'.

We can reject that approach which seeks to make those who can least afford it pay the economic price of Covid and so in turn sow the seeds of even greater division in our already unequal society.

As a nation, we can demand better from those who govern us.

Scotland's Covid heroes and the communities they live in deserve so much more.

On this St Andrew's Day, I send my greetings of solidarity, co-operation and peace to all.



Scottish Labour Leader, Richard Leonard MSP Photo: Martin P. McAdam www.martinmcadam.com