

It is New Year's Eve once again!

When the clock strikes twelve at midnight, the old year comes to an end. At that very moment, we toast the new year and wish each other "Happy New Year".

On New Year's Morning, we wake up to embrace new days. They lie ahead of us, waiting for us, but the time that has passed lies behind us.

And yet – all the things that happen to us leave an impact and provide us with experience, good and not so good. We must carry that experience with us further in life.

These years we are witnessing economic progress in Denmark. Our companies feel it, the Danes feel it and are steaming ahead. Economically, Denmark is doing very well, but we must also take the time to consider what this good fortune is doing for us and doing to us. Is economic progress also translated into social progress?

Our country is becoming richer. But are our lives becoming richer?

Many people experience that the pace of day-to-day life has increased, also more than all can keep up with. There is so much that needs to be done, both at work and during leisure time. Perhaps we create some of the demands ourselves. We do not want to miss out on anything – we want it all, and preferably at the same time.

In our hurry we may become too keen on being in the limelight. It is as if more people say, "look at me" and fewer have an eye for others.

I fear that reflection and consideration may be pushed back and forgotten.

New technology has created altogether new opportunities for contact with others. It is possible to FaceTime with one's children and grandchildren even though they are on the other side of the globe; it is a source of great joy to all parties. However, new technology may also

result in the contact becoming more impersonal – we are “online” all the time – and we forget that, actually, there is a human being at the other end. It is so easy to write a comment or share a photo on social media that may be offensive and leave deep scars. That sort of thing goes into cyberspace, spreading like swarms of flies.

I find there is a tendency that our way of spending time together becomes more superficial, less attentive. We do not take the time to understand each other and we forget to respect each other and take care of each other.

It also affects our children.

There are probably some children who are also watching tonight?

To you I would like to say a few words:

The important thing is not how you look or what you have achieved. But who you are and how you behave towards others – your friends and schoolmates; if you are so busy achieving what is best for yourself all the time, you fail to see how others are doing.

You need to take the time to notice if a friend is unhappy. There must be time to understand if you have said something that hurts a friend, or you have teased someone too much. It is important to patch things up again then.

This does not apply to children only; we who are adults should also bear it in mind.

Trust develops when we meet person-to-person and speak with each other.

We may well disagree. We are entitled to that. It is part of reflecting and forming an opinion. But we must always listen to each other and try to understand each other.

This applies throughout our society.

Our common strength is nurtured when we feel respect for our fellow human beings and place trust in each other, for we all have a responsibility for the community. This is the very roots of our society.

If the roots are not healthy, the tree cannot stand, and it will take many years for a new tree to grow tall and strong.

Therefore, it is serious if people who represent an important part of our society take their responsibility too lightly and fail to meet their obligations. Is this something we have seen recently?

Those entrusted with high positions carry a special responsibility and a special duty to do their best where they are placed.

It makes me very sad if morals decline. What is to become of common decency then? We must be able to distinguish between what is yours and mine, between right and wrong. It ought not to be that difficult.

It is a matter of concern to more and more people that our lifestyle affects the environment and climate change.

Companies have green strategies, Wind, sun and biomass provide us with cleaner energy. At home in the kitchen we sort waste. Many buy organic products.

It is probably the young who are leading the way. They understand that the problems of the future will become theirs. They – unlike us older people – do not want to get stuck in old habits.

Therefore, we must listen attentively to the young when we discuss how to avoid challenging the balance of nature.

We must give consideration to the future. We must give the future careful thought in time.

In Greenland the ice is melting. There, the changes are also conspicuous.

There, in the high north, people live close to nature. Wind and weather,

snow and ice are something all are dependent on throughout the year. These years, nature is generous. The fishing industry is doing well. That generates progress.

It is my hope that the good development in Greenland will continue, and that this vast country will become better integrated and more closely linked to Denmark and the world at large.

I send my warmest New Year greetings to everybody in Greenland.

This summer the Crown Prince and the Crown Princess together with their four children visited the Faroe Islands.

They encountered a modern society with high growth and development, but also a people that is aware of who they themselves are. Faroese people are characterised by a directness, hospitality and warmth that I remember from the visits Prince Henrik and I paid to the country.

Tonight, I wish to say a big thank you to everybody who contributed to making the visit to the Faroe Islands a unique experience for the Crown Prince, the Crown Princess and their children.

I wish everybody in the Faroe Islands a happy New Year.

I send special New Year greetings to the Danish minority in South Schleswig.

There, Danish culture and language live in peaceful co-existence with the German majority. In a world where so many border regions are characterised by conflicts of interest and sharp viewpoints, exactly this region serves as a fine example which both Danish and German institutions and associations can be proud of.

Tonight, my thoughts also go to the Danish soldiers, police officers and specialists who are posted abroad. There are not so many this year, but they matter, each and every one of them in the places where they serve, in countries like Iraq, Afghanistan, Kosovo, and the Baltic States.

They are missed at home. We think of them and wish them a happy New Year.

I also send my New Year greetings to all Danes who live outside Denmark. Regardless of whether they are staying abroad for a short while or have settled, perhaps for good, they contribute to representing Denmark.

It is far from all who are off duty tonight.

Here in Denmark, the Emergency Management Agency, the Police, the Defence and the Fire Brigade are on duty. They see to it that the rest of us can celebrate the new year safely and securely.

On buses and in taxis, on trains and planes, and on-board ships, it is not possible to be off duty on such a New Year's Eve. Also, many are on duty at hospitals, nursing homes, and other institutions where they make sure that New Year's Eve is safe and festive. Many volunteers choose to hold the New Year celebrations at hostels and other shelters where they turn up to make the evening festive for those who are most alone and find life hard.

I send New Year greetings to the many who are working for us all tonight.

I cannot look back at the year that has passed without mentioning the death of Prince Henrik. We spent 50 years together, we had two sons, and eight grandchildren have been added to the family – we were given all that, and much more. The warm sympathy shown us, and the understanding of Prince Henrik's contribution which was so beautifully expressed by everybody in Denmark upon his demise have warmed the hearts of us all, including his family in France. Once again, I wish to express my deep-felt gratitude.

Crown Prince Frederik celebrated his 50th birthday this year. He decided to celebrate it in quite his own way. A big thank you to the many thousands, both grown-ups and children, who participated in the Royal Run, either by running the route or – like myself – by cheering on the runners.

It was a fine day that made him both happy and grateful, and which made me so proud.

The Crown Prince, the Crown Princess, Prince Joachim and Princess Marie and my eight wonderful grandchildren together with me have so much to say thanks for. We all feel the warm support which we encounter everywhere, on special occasions, as well as in day-to-day life.

Life brings us both sorrows and joys.

Let us welcome the new year with reflection and consideration. Let us carry our experience – good and not so good – into the new year and let us embrace the year in a spirit of hope and confidence.

I wish you all a happy New Year!

GOD BLESS DENMARK

Another year has gone by. 2019 lies behind us now with all that it brought us: memories that will endure, good as well as sad ones, and challenges we had to take on, difficult as well as stimulating ones.

This year, it is 50 years ago that man landed on the moon, and we were able to see our own planet, Earth, as a small globe in outer space: quite alone, but so beautiful and round and blue – the blue planet where we belong. For us here in Denmark, it is perhaps not so surprising that the planet is blue. After all, we have the sea in front of us and the blue sky above us.

Regardless of how grand and varied it may seem, our Earth is vulnerable. We are in the process of realising that, and it gives rise to concern, not least among many young people who see the climate change effects that are clearly visible these years. We have a shared responsibility for our beautiful globe, so teeming with life. It is an essential challenge to us all today, and it is important that we all pay attention to how we live and what actions we take.

In our age, a feeling has emerged which may be difficult to talk about. However, we must put it into words in order to defeat it.

Loneliness: it is a feeling that many experience. Not only socially vulnerable people. Also elderly people who see their spouses or their contemporaries pass away – what happened to them, all those who used to fill everyday life. But also children and very young people may experience loneliness. Who wants to play with me? Who can I talk to? Not just on Facebook, but in real life: face to face, in private with a friend of the same age or with someone who is older and who one can confide in. Someone to share one's thoughts with.

We need to talk together, also about loneliness. We need each other. We need to have it confirmed that we matter.

2020 will be a year with a great many things to remember. On 9 April, it is 80 years ago that Denmark was occupied. An event that came to influence all those who experienced it, and which has left deep traces in the consciousness of Denmark. Five years passed. But then the Liberation came on 4 and 5 May 1945. It filled everybody with euphoric joy, which was also felt by those who like me were only five years old. But not all could share in the joy, for the Island of Bornholm was subjected to heavy bombardment that left the towns of Rønne and Nexø badly damaged and resulted in a tragic loss of civilian lives.

It is a long time ago, and those who experienced the events of the time have almost all passed away. Nevertheless, it is five years that continue to be remembered, also with pride, for the spirit of solidarity and self-sacrifice that showed what we in Denmark are capable of. We must continue to stand guard over the values we fought for and which remain the foundation of our society. It is disgraceful to see how anti-Semitism raises its ugly head once again, also here in our country. Anti-Semitism, intolerance and repression of people who think differently – it has no place in our society. This is something we must pay close attention to, and which we must help each other to counter.

On 10 July, we shall celebrate the centenary of the Reunification of South Jutland with Denmark. Reunification Day became a landmark day, not just for the people of South Jutland but a day that involved all

the people of Denmark. In the thousands, from all over the country, people flocked south to see King Christian X ride across the border on the white horse. Many may feel today that it is a distant event, but ask the people of South Jutland: they know that a page was turned in the history of Denmark on that day. It will be fine for us to celebrate that when we reach the anniversary, and we will celebrate it.

In late summer, I visited Schleswig-Holstein where I received a warm and festive welcome, which contributed to confirming the strong neighbourly relations and good friendship between Germany and Denmark.

It also became an unforgettable meeting with the Danish minority.

You did not come home to Denmark 100 years ago. However, Denmark is and will continue to be the country of your heart. I was moved to hear that, also from the young generation. I shall never forget that!

It is thanks to both the Danish minority in Germany and the German minority in Denmark that the border country has developed so harmoniously and peacefully over the years. It has come to serve as a model for the rest of the world. I send my warm New Year greetings to everybody in the border country.

While the ice around Greenland is loosening its grip, the world's attention is increasingly turning towards the country in the high north. That country and its people are very close to me and the heart of my family. We always follow events and developments in Greenland, and you are in our thoughts, both when there are difficulties and when you address the problems with confidence. I wish everybody in Greenland a good and happy New Year.

My thoughts also go to the Faroe Islands on the last evening of the year. Also from there, my family and I have warm and good memories. With tireless persistence you have managed to overcome many of the difficulties facing a society that is geographically isolated and exposed to the forces of nature. I send my heartfelt New Year wishes to everybody in the Faroe Islands.

Under distant skies, our Danish soldiers who are posted abroad contribute to freedom and stability. We must remember that on this evening when they are particularly missed at home.

I send my warmest greetings and good wishes for the new year to all who are posted abroad and to their families.

It is not only in other countries that Danes are on duty. My New Year greetings go to everybody in the defence, the emergency management services, the police, the health care sector and all others who are at work this evening and tonight. Men and women who all attend to their duties while others are off work and can celebrate New Year safely and securely.

Wherever in the world one goes, one will encounter Danes. In spring, I visited Argentina. Also in that country there are many who have Danish roots and who hold on to this heritage. To them and to all others with Danish roots, wherever in the world they are, I send my New Year wishes with a "thank you" for their loyalty to the old country.

Every day, my big family makes me happy and proud. The Crown Prince and the Crown Princess have plenty to do, and at the same time they manage to create a warm home for their four children.

Prince Joachim and Princess Marie together with their two children are in Paris, where Prince Joachim is receiving additional training at the French military academy. At the same time, I have enjoyed watching his talks about Danish history on TV. I knew he would be good at it.

In the new year, Prince Christian's confirmation will take place. He will soon be a young man with life ahead of him. I shall celebrate my 80th birthday. I have many years behind me.

I am grateful for all that the years bring me, and for all the warmth that I and all my family continue to be met with. It is a source of inspiration as well as an obligation.

We are standing at the door of the year 2020.

We do not know yet what it will bring. We open the door a little, it is like making a new acquaintance with new opportunities. We all have plans,

big and not so big plans, and wishes, more or less attainable wishes.
Let us enter the new year together. I wish everybody a happy New Year.
May it become a good year for Denmark.

GOD BLESS DENMARK