

A PASTORAL LETTER

To be read in all churches and chapels of the Diocese on
the Second Sunday of Easter, Divine Mercy Sunday, 8th April 2018

ON HOLY COMMUNION

My dear brothers and sisters,

On this Second Sunday of Easter, the Gospel tells of the encounter of the Apostle Thomas with the Risen Jesus which leads to his supreme profession of faith, *"My Lord and my God!"*¹ I want to recall today how we who have not seen and yet believe² come to this encounter of faith with Jesus Christ now in His Risen Body. It is an encounter which leads us in the Holy Eucharist to constantly renew Thomas' profession of faith: *"My Lord and my God!"* In this Year of the Eucharist, I have reflected with you on how Christ loved us to the end³ by entrusting to the Church the Sacrifice and Sacrament of the Eucharist. Today, I want to recall how He invites us to the most intimate communion with Himself which we rightly call 'Holy Communion'. The Catechism of the Catholic Church reminds us: *"To receive Holy Communion is to receive Christ himself"*.⁴

On this Sunday of Divine Mercy, we glimpse the mercy which led Our Lord to so entrust Himself to us and are moved to reflect on how we must be ready to receive Him and prepared in our own hearts *"for so great and so holy a moment"*.⁵ We may face the danger today of seeing the reception of Holy Communion in terms of secular inclusiveness. It would then become a token of our hospitality, rather than as the gift of the Holy Body and Blood of Christ which constitutes the most radical call to holiness and the means to becoming the saint we are each called to be.

At the end of his life, Saint John Vianney reflected, if only all his parishioners had accepted his call to frequent Holy Communion *"they would all now be saints"*. Holy Communion offers such an immediate path to holiness, to complete union with Christ Himself that He Himself told us: *"He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood*

¹ Jn 20: 28

² cf Jn 20: 29

³ Cf Jn 13: 1

⁴ CCC 1382

⁵ CCC 1385