

abides in me, and I in him".⁶ The *Catechism* reminds us that we will always find in Holy Communion our true nourishment which restores our strength; separates us from daily sin; breaks disordered attachment to creatures; and roots the whole of our lives in Christ;⁷ and makes us so completely one with His Mystical Body the Church that we are truly "*united heart and soul*".⁸

We see why we can never approach Holy Communion casually, still less if we have not confessed and repented of any mortal sin or of a lifestyle in contradiction with our Christian calling. The Apostle Paul urged the first Christians to examine themselves carefully before receiving Holy Communion because anyone who did so in an unworthy state would, he said, be "*guilty of profaning the body and blood of the Lord*".⁹ The Church calls us to frequent Holy Communion, prepared by the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation so that we might become holy, might become saints. The Second Vatican Council urged us to "frequent" both these two Sacraments eagerly and devoutly as the path to holiness.¹⁰

This Eastertide, I want to invite you to consider how we each prepare for this moment of Holy Communion in the days, hours and minutes before we approach the Altar. Let us ask ourselves how we seek to receive Him with the deepest reverence and love, and how we spend the precious moments after receiving Holy Communion. Saint Teresa of Avila wrote beautifully of this time when she reflected "*we are as close to Him, as we can be ... He will do miracles within us, and will give us what we ask, since having come to visit us, He is as it were in our very house.*" With the Apostle Thomas, may we not allow these moments to pass without many renewed acts of love, of adoration, of reparation, of thanksgiving, and of that Easter faith which cries out: "*My Lord and my God!*"

United with you in this Eucharistic faith and love,

+ Mark

Bishop of Shrewsbury

⁶ Jn 6: 56

⁷ CCC 1393-1395

⁸ Acts 4: 32

⁹ 1 Cor 11: 27

¹⁰ Sacrosanctum Concilium 59, Christus Dominus 30