



DIOCESE OF SALFORD

Pastoral Letter of the Right Reverend John Arnold Bishop of Salford

Letter on the Liturgy and Reverence for the Eucharist.

To be read in all Churches on the weekend of 5th/6th October 2019

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

On the Feast of St Francis of Assisi, we launched Stage Three of our pastoral programme, “Hope in the Future”. Our theme is our celebration of Sunday Mass. During this stage, using four ‘pastoral messages and worksheets’, we hope to encourage everyone to value Sunday Mass more and more, devoting ourselves to its preparation and celebration, so that it may be an encounter with the presence of Jesus in our lives and a strengthening of our Church and ourselves as missionary disciples.

I am very grateful for the developments, in many parishes, recognising the good works that are already being achieved and with the promotion of leadership teams and the increase in the number of people volunteering for specific tasks in both pastoral ministry and administration. I am also aware that some parishes have needed to delay some of the planning and actions required by Hope in the Future. This was expected due to the changes in the Diocese with the movement of priests to new appointments and the amalgamation of parishes. Hopefully, as these parishes progress with their own implementation of Hope in the Future, they will draw on the experience of the parishes that have moved ahead. Those who have not completed Stages One and Two should not feel that they cannot embark now on Stage Three. In a sense it stands alone and does not require the previous stages in order to be of value.

In recent times it may be said Sunday has simply become just another day of the week. Although an increasing number of people are required to work on Sundays, most of us still have the opportunity to give time and importance to our faith and make our Sundays special. We must not lose or

devalue this ancient command to keep the Sabbath day holy. It is in the celebration of Sunday that we nourish our faith through the Eucharist and strengthen ourselves for our missionary work throughout the week.

Sundays are also important occasions to spend time together as families. For so many newly formed parishes, this can be a way of celebrating and building a new sense of parish family.

During this stage of “Hope in the Future”, resources will be made available to help in enriching our Sunday liturgy. As we begin this Stage, I wonder how many of us might have to admit that we perhaps forget the importance of what we are celebrating at Mass and as we receive communion? It might have become a part of a routine. Yes, it is important that we are at Mass, but do we properly prepare for the privilege of receiving Our Lord in the Eucharist? During this coming year I would be grateful if two practical measures could be put in place that may help us in our appreciation of the presence of Christ in the Eucharist.

In the first place, I would like it to be the practice across our Diocese that Holy Communion under both kinds be made available, wherever possible, and with suitable catechesis, at both Sunday and weekday Masses. This was specifically promoted in a series of documents following the Second Vatican Council. In many parishes it has been a long-established tradition. I would not envisage there ever being a shortage of Eucharistic Ministers to assist the priest in providing this opportunity. I have written a separate letter to all parish priests to make reference to key documents that promote this practice.

While it is true that receiving Holy Communion under one kind alone is to receive Our Lord whole and entire, it is also true that the Lord invited us to ‘take and drink’ as well as to ‘take and eat’. It is right, where possible, to respond to this invitation of Our Lord. In this way, and in many others we will examine in this coming year, we can deepen our reverence towards, and understanding of, the real presence of the Lord who gives himself to us, and continue to grow in appreciation of the Mass as a personal encounter with our loving Saviour.

Secondly, I would be very pleased to see times of Eucharistic Adoration being observed in all parishes. In some parishes where this has been promoted, many would feel that it has had a significant positive impact on the life and energy of the community. In the short term, adoration may be easily achieved for short periods, perhaps before or after Mass or other liturgies. This, of course, requires supervision and the constant presence of people. In the longer term, parishes may wish to consider permanent exposition, devised in a way that guarantees the security of the Blessed

Sacrament. We already have a few parishes with small chapels dedicated to permanent exposition.

I believe that these two measures may have a very significant and valuable impact in our Diocese.

In former times, so many of our churches remained open throughout the day and the present practice of closing churches, apart from the times they are used for Mass and other liturgies, is something that is greatly regretted by many people. Might parishes consider keeping churches open during the day when possible, with whatever security measures are needed?

Using the resources which will be available, I hope that we can be sure to enrich our own celebration of our Sunday Mass, for our own benefit and as a preparation for our missionary work each day as we seek to live as “ambassadors for Christ” in our daily lives. But I hope that this will also have an impact on the many people who have either drifted away from the practice of their faith, or even prove to be an effective invitation to people who are seeking faith in their lives and feel drawn to our Church.

I am sure that this next stage of Hope in the Future can benefit us all. The Mass reminds us that the Lord is with us on our journey and he promised his disciples that he would always be with them, until the end of the age. He is present to us in the Eucharist and precious to us in the reception of Holy Communion.

God bless you for all that you do.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "+John". The plus sign is small and positioned to the left of the name "John", which is written in a cursive, slightly slanted script.

Bishop of Salford