



Diocesan Centre  
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**Rt Rev. Joseph Toal** STB KC\*HS  
**Bishop of Motherwell**

28<sup>th</sup> July 2021

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

I wish you all well, and hope you are enjoying the Scottish summer.

As we follow Liturgical Year B this summer, we listen to Chapter 6 of St John's Gospel at Mass through successive Sundays. Last Sunday we heard the Gospel of the Miracle of the Loaves and the Fish, when Jesus fed the multitude gathered around him with the five barley loaves and two fish – *"Then Jesus took the loaves, gave thanks, and gave them out to all who were sitting ready; he then did the same with the fish, giving out as much as was wanted"*. Hearing of the Lord's abundant blessing on the hungry people we are encouraged to place our faith in the Lord's generosity when he feeds us with his Body and Blood in the Holy Eucharist. We also are hungry for the Lord's love and protection, and particularly for the sustenance he offers to us in Holy Communion. We come, therefore, to each Celebration of Mass in anticipation and thanksgiving for such a wonderful gift.

In the forthcoming Sundays we will hear Jesus' teaching about himself as the Bread of Life that has come down from heaven – *"I am the living bread which has come down from heaven. Anyone who eats this bread will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is my flesh for the life of the world"*. Our firm faith in the miracle of the Eucharist, that the Lord's Body and Blood become truly present in the consecrated bread and wine, is strengthened and renewed by the Lord's own words and our participation in the holy mysteries of his passion, death and resurrection renewed for us in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. I invite you to listen attentively to the Lord's words and to renew your faith in the salvation made present for us in each Mass celebrated. At the end of his discourse in John 6, Jesus asked the apostles if they wished to go away as others were doing, and Simon Peter answered, *"Lord, who shall we go to? You have the message of eternal life, and we believe; you are the Holy One of God"*. When present at Mass may this profession of faith be ours and may the Lord reassure us of its truth and of all the goodness he bestows upon us.

We continue to experience some effects from the coronavirus and, while we hope life can become more "normal" again, we are aware that some threats to our health and well-being remain and will require continuing caution and willingness to make decisions and accept sacrifices for the benefit of others as well as ourselves. We do hope though that more of the faithful will now feel able to return to our Catholic practice of attending Sunday Mass, recognising that we will continue to make every effort to ensure everybody's safety as more restrictions are lifted and larger congregations can gather in our churches. I would like to extend a special invitation to families to come to Sunday Mass, wishing especially to welcome parents and children, teenagers, and young adults, to revitalise the great Catholic tradition of attending Mass each week, thus acknowledging the gift of faith received from the Lord and sustained by his abiding presence in the Holy Eucharist. It may be true that the forced separation of recent months has lessened the desire of some to participate in the Church's worship, but there comes a time to take stock and hopefully to decide on a path of renewed interest and participation.

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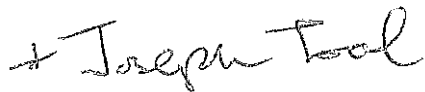
Hopefully this can be a time of new life and hope, not something forced upon us, but rather an invitation from the Lord to come and listen and be feed with the beautiful gift he gives us of himself in the Eucharist.

I take this opportunity also to encourage you to attend Mass in your own parishes on Sundays (including, of course, Saturday Vigil Masses). It is quite easy for people to chose to attend Mass in other parishes when churches are so close to one another but we do all live within the boundaries of a particular parish, which we therefore belong to. We are clearly going to face a period of readjustment of some sort in the post-pandemic period and I would think that the loyalty of the local Catholic community to their own parish church, and participation in its worship, sacramental and social life, will very much determine its viability and vitality. Every parish will need the commitment of the present and future generations as well remembering the great deeds of the past.

With grateful thanks to the Lord for the wonderful gift of the Eucharist, I thank you for your own prayers and for your support for the Church . May the Lord be close to each one of us and our families as we look to him in our present need and in our hope for the future.

Yours in Christ,

With my prayers and best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "+ Joseph Toal". The signature is written in a cursive style with a small cross at the beginning.

**+ Joseph Toal**