

What do we do when we can't go to Mass?

Receiving Holy Communion at Mass

The reception of Holy Communion is one of the most intimate moments in the life of every Catholic. The great mystic and Doctor of the Church, Saint Thérèse of Lisieux, writes eloquently of the first time she ever received Holy Communion: I knew that I was loved and said, "I love You, and I give myself to You forever."

But what do we do when we can't go to Mass?

Many of the Saints have recommended that we should make a "Spiritual Communion," a prayer professing faith in Jesus' presence in the Eucharist and inviting him to come to live in our heart.

Our beloved Pope Emeritus, Benedict XVI reminds us that even when we cannot go to Mass and cannot receive Holy Communion "it is beneficial to cultivate a desire for full union with Christ through the practice of spiritual communion, praised by Pope John Paul II and recommended by saints who were masters of the spiritual life." (*Sacramentum caritatis*, no. 55) This practice is also recommended by many of the Saints, including Saint Thomas Aquinas, St. Teresa of Avila, and St. Jean Vianney.

How to make a Spiritual Communion

Begin by examining your conscience and making a good Act of Contrition. Then pray one of the prayers recommended by the Saints for inviting Christ into your heart. Here is one by Saint Alphonsus Liguori:

My Jesus, I believe that you are present in the most Blessed Sacrament. I love you above all things and I desire to receive You into my soul. Since I cannot now receive you sacramentally, come at least spiritually into my heart. I embrace you as if you were already there, and unite myself wholly to you. Never permit me to be separated from you. Amen.

A Spiritual Communion can never fully take the place of receiving Holy Communion at Mass, but in these extraordinary times it can help us to stay close to Jesus in the Most Blessed Sacrament of his Body and Blood.