

What is Spiritual Communion?

We are currently living in frightening times. Who would have ever thought that we'd see a pandemic so bad that businesses would shut down, travel would be restricted, and even Mass would no longer be open to the public! If you feel a sense of emptiness about going for an extended period of time without receiving Holy Communion, you're not alone. Many people feel the same way.

This is a good time to talk about spiritual communion. What is spiritual communion? Spiritual Communion is a prayer of desire to receive Jesus in Holy Communion. St. Thomas Aquinas describes it as, "an ardent desire to receive Jesus in the Holy Sacrament, and a loving embrace as though we had already received Him."

Pope St. John Paul II warmly recommended the practice of spiritual communion in his encyclical, *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, saying, "[In the Eucharist], unlike any other sacrament, the mystery [of communion] is so perfect that it brings us to the heights of every good thing: Here is the ultimate goal of every human desire, because here we attain God and God joins himself to us in the most perfect union. Precisely for this reason it is good to cultivate in our hearts a constant desire for the sacrament of the Eucharist. This was the origin of the practice of 'spiritual communion,' which has happily been established in the Church for centuries and recommended by saints who were masters of the spiritual life. St. Teresa of Jesus wrote: '...Spiritual communion... is a most beneficial practice; by it the love of God will be greatly impressed on you' [The Way of Perfection, Ch. 35]."

An act of spiritual communion is made whenever you want to receive Communion, but are unable to do so. It is a good idea to make acts of spiritual communion often. The saints have done so many times per day. But in times like this, when Mass is not being celebrated publicly, it is especially appropriate to make acts of spiritual communion frequently.

To make an act of spiritual communion, you simply express to Jesus your love of Him and your desire to be united to Him. An example of a spiritual communion is the prayer, "Jesus, I long to receive you in Holy Communion, but I cannot do so now. Please come into my heart through spiritual communion." Here is a slightly longer example: "My Jesus, I believe that You are present in the Most Holy Sacrament. I love You above all things, and I desire to receive You into my soul. Since I cannot at this moment 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."

Spiritual Communion has profound effects on the soul. It increases our love for Jesus in the Holy Eucharist, and unites us more firmly to Him. St. Leonard of Port Maurice says, "If you practice the holy exercise of spiritual Communion several times each day, within a month you will see your heart completely changed!" In this unprecedented time, let us strive to stay closely connected to Jesus through frequent acts of spiritual communion.