

Act of Spiritual Communion

As Catholics living in the United States of America, most of us are used to having ready access to our Lord in the sacraments, most especially in the Eucharist, in which Jesus is truly, really present in His Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity.

However, with the COVID-19 pandemic, we are now experiencing a reality which countless other Catholics around the world and throughout time have had to endure: the inability to receive Jesus in the Eucharist on a regular basis. So while we hope and pray with confidence that we will soon be able to attend, pray and participate at Mass as we are used to, in the meantime we are able to become familiar with and participate in a practice which is likewise widespread throughout the world and history: the Act of Spiritual Communion. Together with the ability to watch the Mass on tv or online — something obviously not possible until just a few decades ago — Spiritual Communion is a real way for us to express to God our desire to be united with Him.

A Spiritual Communion is simply a prayer in which we profess our belief in Jesus' Real Presence in the Eucharist and likewise ask Him to unite Himself to us. It's important to be clear: praying a Spiritual Communion is not the same thing as receiving Jesus in the Eucharist. In the Eucharist, we literally receive Jesus — His Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity — in our bodies & souls under the appearance of bread and wine.

However, although a Spiritual Communion is not the same thing as the reception of Holy Communion, it nonetheless has great spiritual value and power, as we are inviting our Lord to dwell within us spiritually with the hope of soon doing so sacramentally. Throughout the centuries many saints have not only practiced making a Spiritual Communion themselves — even in addition to receiving Holy Communion — but they have highly extolled the practice to the faithful. St. Teresa of Avila wrote, “When you do not receive Communion and you do not attend Mass, you can make a spiritual Communion, which is a most beneficial practice; by it the love of God will be greatly impressed on you.” And Padre Pio sought to make a Spiritual Communion throughout the day in order to always remain united with Jesus in all that he did.

In a vision, Our Lord explained it to St. Catherine of Siena by showing her two chalices: one made of gold, the other of silver. He told her that her sacramental

Communions were preserved in the gold chalice and that her spiritual communions were in the silver chalice. He told Blessed Jane of the Cross that each time she communicated spiritually, she received graces of the same kind as those received in sacramental Communion.

St. Pope John Paul II was a great advocate of spiritual communion. He wrote in his encyclical *The Eucharist in its Relationship to the Church*, “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: ‘When you do not receive communion and you do not attend Mass, you can make a spiritual communion, which is a most beneficial practice; by it the love of God will be greatly impressed on you.’”

There is no one way to make a Spiritual Communion.

St. 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.”

Classic:

At Thy feet, O my Jesus, I prostrate myself and I offer Thee repentance of my contrite heart, which is humbled in its nothingness and in Thy holy presence. I adore Thee in the Sacrament of Thy love, the ineffable Eucharist. I desire to receive Thee into the poor dwelling that my heart offers Thee. While waiting for the happiness of sacramental communion, I wish to possess Thee in spirit. Come to me, O my Jesus, since I, for my part, am coming to Thee! May Thy love embrace my whole being in life and in death. I believe in Thee, I hope in Thee, I love Thee. Amen.

Classic:

O Immaculate Queen of Heaven and Earth, Mother of God and Mediatrix of every grace: I believe that Thy dearly beloved Son, Our Lord Jesus Christ, is truly, really, and substantially contained in the Most Blessed Sacrament. I love Him above all things

and I long to receive Him into my heart. Since I cannot now receive Him sacramentally, be so good as to place Him spiritually in my soul. O my Jesus, I embrace Thee as One who has already come, and I unite myself entirely to Thee. Never permit me to be separated from Thee. Amen.

In whatever form you make a Spiritual Communion, consider following the example and counsel of the saints and pray a prayer like these at those times in which you are unable to receive our Lord in the Eucharist. And have confidence that Jesus will both hear and answer your prayer.

~ Fr. Robert T. Cooper