

CONCERNING SPIRITUAL COMMUNION

They devoted themselves to the teaching of the apostles and to the communal life, to the breaking of the bread and to the prayers.
—Acts 2:42

In his encyclical *ECCLESIA DE EUCHARISTIA* [Lt., A Eucharistic Church] (17 Apr 2003), Pope John Paul II encouraged the practice of SPIRITUAL COMMUNION, which has been a part of Catholic life for centuries. By way of example, the excerpt below is from The Spiritual Combat first published in 1589.

ALTHOUGH actual reception of the sacrament of the Eucharist is limited to once a day, you are nevertheless at liberty to communicate in spirit every hour. [N.B. The 1983 revision of The Code of Canon Law now permits reception of Holy Communion at every Mass.] And nothing except your own negligence can prevent you from receiving the inestimable benefits to be derived from such a union with Him. It is worth noting that spiritual communion is sometimes of greater benefit to the soul and more acceptable to God than many sacramental communions received with little preparation and less affection.

When, therefore, you are properly disposed to receive the Son of God spiritually, be assured that He is ready thus to come to you as food and nourishment.

By way of preparation, think of Jesus, and after contemplating the multitude of your offenses, declare to Him your sincere sorrow for them. Then, with profound respect and unshaking faith, beg Him to condescend graciously to enter your heart; entreat Him to replenish it with grace as a remedy against its inherent weaknesses, and as a shield against the violence of its enemies. Every time you succeed in mortifying your passions, or in performing an act of virtue, take that opportunity of preparing your heart for the Son of God, as He has commanded. Then, addressing yourself to Him, fervently beg the blessings of His presence, both as the physician of your soul and as its protector. Ask Him ever to dwell within your soul and so to take possession of it as to repel its would-be destroyers.

Recall too, your last sacramental communion, and inflamed with love for your Savior, say to Him: "When, O God, shall I receive Thee again? When will that happy day

return, when once again you will dwell within my heart?"

If, however, you desire to communicate spiritually with an increase of devotion, begin to prepare for it over night. Let every mortification and every act of virtue tend to make your soul a more fitting abode for His spiritual presence.

In the morning, as you awake, meditate upon the innumerable advantages to be derived from Holy Communion. Recall that the soul regains her lost virtues, recovers her pristine purity, and is rendered worthy to partake of the merits of the cross. The very reception of the sacrament is highly pleasing to the Eternal Father, Who desires everyone to enjoy this divine gift.

Later endeavor to excite within your soul an ardent desire of receiving Him in compliance with His holy will. Let your words match the sentiment as follows:

"O Lord,
since I am not permitted the joy
of Thy sacramental presence this day,
let Thy goodness and omnipotence decree
the cleansing of my soul from the stain of sin,
that healed of my wounds,
I may deserve to receive Thee in spirit.
Every day and every hour,
fortified anew by Thy grace,
may I courageously resist my enemies,
particularly that failing against which for the love of Thee,
I wage unceasing war."

Dom Lorenzo Scupoli, The Spiritual Combat (Rockford, IL: Tan Books and Publishers, Inc., 1945), pp. 169-170.