



## WHAT IS SPIRITUAL COMMUNION?

Bridget Klawitter, Pastoral Associate

For various reasons we may be prevented from receiving the Eucharist at Mass. We may have broken the one hour fast, be in a state of mortal sin, or we could even be homebound, unable to leave our home to attend Mass. These days, with the COVID-19 pandemic, our parishes are closed, and our typical Sunday Masses are being livestreamed into our homes. In these cases, the Church encourages us to make an act of “Spiritual Communion,” where we unite ourselves to God through prayer. It is a beautiful way to express to God our desire to be united with him when we are unable to complete that union in the physical reception of Holy Communion.

So, what is **Spiritual Communion**? St. Thomas Aquinas described it as “an ardent desire to receive Jesus in the most holy sacrament and lovingly embrace him” at a time or in circumstances when we cannot receive him in sacramental Communion. The Catechism of the Council of Trent devoted a special section to Spiritual Communion in its program of renewal in the late 16th century. It is a Christian practice of desiring union with Jesus Christ in the Holy Eucharist and can be used as a preparation for Holy Mass and by individuals who cannot receive Holy Communion. In the past, instruction manuals gave as the most familiar situation, the need of a mother to stay home from Sunday Mass to care for a sick child, thereby missing the opportunity for Communion.

Countless saints incorporated this type of prayer into their daily lives, not being satisfied with receiving Jesus in the Eucharist once a week or even once a day. Making an act of Spiritual Communion for them was an essential part of life and drew them closer to God daily. St. Josemaria Escriva encouraged everyone to make a Spiritual Communion as often as they could, “What a source of grace there is in Spiritual Communion! Practice it frequently and you’ll have greater presence of God and closer union with him in all your actions.” Padre Pio also had a habit of making a Spiritual Communion throughout the day outside of the celebration of Mass. He desired to be always united with Jesus Christ in everything he did. In his encyclical, *Ecclesia de Eucharistia* (A Eucharistic Church), in April 2003, Pope John Paul II encouraged the practice of Spiritual Communion, “which has been a wonderful part of Catholic life for centuries and recommended by saints who were masters of the spiritual life.”

Below is a traditional prayer of Spiritual Communion that many saints have prayed over the years. It can be prayed if you find yourself at Mass unable to receive the Eucharist, or even during your daily work, lifting your thoughts to God. The goal of our lives should be communion with God and an act of Spiritual Communion can help a person draw closer to that goal.

*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.  
Amen.*

Spiritual Communion is a great way to cultivate our love for Christ in the Eucharist for those times when we can’t make it to Daily Mass for a variety of reasons including these days where parishes are unable to offer Mass to the community. It doesn’t matter when or where you are, as long as you practice the devotion with “renewed faith, reverence, humility and in complete trust in the goodness of the Divine Redeemer” and are “united to Him in the spirit of the most ardent charity,” as Pope Pius XII says in his encyclical *Mediator Dei* (The Sacred Liturgy). Spiritual Communion needs no special instruction; it only requires the same disposition as the actual reception of the sacrament and a turning to Jesus with the heart.