

THE GOOD OF SPIRITUAL COMMUNION

All Catholics are required to attend Mass on Sundays and on other Holy Days of obligation (Cf. CIC 1246-1248). Sometimes, however, attending Mass is an impossibility. We may fall ill, roads may ice over, children may become sick, or some other serious life issue may prevent us from attending Mass.

At other times, there may be no Masses readily available. On all such occasions, a soul is not guilty of committing a mortal sin since in addition to grave matter and full knowledge of the sin, an individual must also freely consent to the offense (CCC n.1859). Here, the individual has no other reasonable choice. In addition, there are times when wherein one may opt not to receive sacramentally (i.e. physically) the Eucharist at Mass.

In such circumstances, we should make use of the venerable treasury of traditions that has been passed down to us through the ages, such as the practice of 'spiritual communion'. Many saints have expressed the benefits of spiritual communion, including St. Teresa of Avila (d. 1582), the Doctor of Prayer and Patroness of the Sick, who explains that spiritual communion is "a most beneficial practice" (*The Way of Perfection*, ch. 35). In spiritual communion, even without sacramentally consuming the Eucharist, the complete effect of the sacrament, viz. union with Christ, which sustains, increases, restores and gives incomprehensible delight to the soul is made fully available to the communicant (cf. *The Summa Theologica* of St. Thomas Aquinas, III q.80 a.1 ad.3; *ST* III q.79 a.1).

As with sacramental communion, one should ardently prepare for the reception of Christ by making an act of true contrition. The individual should recite the *Confiteor*:

*I confess to almighty God
and to you, my brothers and sisters,
that I have greatly sinned,
in my thoughts and in my words,
in what I have done and in what I have failed to do,
(striking the breast three times) through my fault, through my fault,
through my most grievous fault;
therefore I ask blessed Mary ever-Virgin,
all the Angels and Saints,
and you, my brothers and sisters,
to pray for me to the Lord our God.*

Once sorrow for one's sins has been expressed and a firm resolution to amend one's life has been made, recite the following prayer of St. Alphonsus Ligouri:

O my Jesus, I believe that Thou art present in the Blessed Sacrament. I love Thee above all things and I desire Thee in my soul. Since I cannot now receive Thee sacramentally, come at least spiritually into my heart. As though thou wert already there, I embrace Thee and unite myself wholly to Thee; permit not that I should ever be separated from Thee. Amen.



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