

A NOTE TO REFLECT ON THE GIFT OF SPIRITUAL COMMUNION:

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."

Spiritual communion isn't as much a part of the Catholic vocabulary and consciousness as it was in the past, though it is just as real an opportunity for eucharistic grace as it ever was. Ironically, the encouragement of actual reception of the Body and Blood of Christ at Mass and the routine availability of eucharistic Communion today, a wonderful development begun in the time of Pope Pius X and emphasized by the Second Vatican Council, may have helped cause this other eucharistic gift to be overshadowed in our time.

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.

Due to the COVID – 19 pandemic, the faithful are not able to receive sacramental communion at this time, but are not prohibited from receiving Communion spiritually and receiving strength from the grace of the sacrament during a waiting period which can be difficult and disheartening.

Spiritual communion needs no special instruction and the opportunities for receiving it are limitless. It only requires the same disposition as the actual reception of the sacrament and a turning to Jesus with the heart.

Prayer of Spiritual Communion

No particular prayer or formulary is required, though there are acts of spiritual communion in Catholic prayer books to help focus a proper intention. One of the most popular is that composed by St. Alphonsus Liguori:

"My Jesus, I believe that you are present in the Tabernacle and the most Blessed Sacrament.
I love you above all things and I desire you with all my heart.
Since I cannot now receive you sacramentally,
I ask you to come spiritually into my heart.
I embrace you as if you were already in my heart
and unite myself to you completely.
Please do not let me ever be separated from you."