

A Spiritual Communion

As Catholics, for various reasons, whether we are present at Mass or unable to leave our homes, we may find ourselves unable to receive Holy Communion. This is not a modern or rare occurrence in life of the Catholic faithful throughout history, and as a result the Church has a rich understanding of how a person can be spiritual united to the Eucharistic Presence of Jesus, in a process known as a Spiritual Communion.

A Spiritual Communion is an act by which we join ourselves to God in prayer, expressing our fervent desire to be united with Him to the degree that is possible when physically receiving the Eucharist.

Great saints throughout the Church's history, from Saint Theresa of Avila to Saint Padre Pio have encouraged the frequent practice of Spiritual Communion, writing about how the daily practice has benefited their own spiritual lives. The graces of a Spiritual Communion can even be as fruitful as those of a Sacramental Communion. Saint Thomas Aquinas, in writing on the theology of the Sacraments, notes that the reality of the Sacrament can be received through the very desire for it [as we speak of a Baptism of Desire], a point that the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith echoes in a 1983 document, stating that the faithful, when deprived of the Eucharist, through their desire for the sacrament in union with the Church, no matter how distant they may be physically, they are intimately and really united to her and therefore receive the fruits of the sacrament.

The ultimate goal of our lives is to grow in union with God on the way to full communion with Him in heaven. The practice of making a spiritual communion can help each of us draw closer to that goal, especially in times of difficulty.

Here is an example of a Spiritual Communion that was written by Saint Alphonsus Liguori, the eighteenth-century Bishop and Doctor of the Church:

**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.**

