

## **Spiritual Communion**

St Thomas Aquinas described a Spiritual Communion as “an ardent desire to receive Jesus in the Most Holy Sacrament and in lovingly embracing Him.” In a spiritual Communion, we, with contrite, humble hearts, ask our Lord to come to us in the same way He would if we were able to receive the Sacrament. This can be done as often as one likes, informally in one’s own words or through one of the traditional prayers which appear below. We do well to receive Holy Communion when we are not able to actually do so. The advantage of a Spiritual Communion is that we can make it as often as we like! I recommend doing it daily! St Teresa of Avila used to receive Our Lord in Spiritual Communion ever quarter of an hour.

What is the value of this practice? In a vision of Our Lord, St Catherine of Siena saw Christ hold up two ciboria (the vessel which contains the Sacred Hosts) and say, “In this golden ciborium I put your Sacramental Communion. In this silver ciborium I put your Spiritual Communion. Both ciboria are quite pleasing to Me.” St Alphonsus Liguori taught that a Spiritual Communion produces effects in our souls similar to a Sacramental Communion according to the dispositions with which it is made. The greater the desire for Jesus and the greater love with which Jesus is welcomed the greater the graces received. The graces received may be as great as – or greater than – those received by some people in the actual Sacrament. Though, of course, the Sacrament itself is inherently greater, our disposition toward the Sacrament effect whether and how we receive its fruits. For example, imagine a woman who is unable to be with her husband but who desires him as contrasted with a woman who has her husband's presence but doesn't care for him. Which husband would be more apt to pour out his love for his wife?

### **How to Receive Spiritual Communion**

St Leonard of Port-Maurice offers this advice for receiving Spiritual Communion:

In order to facilitate a practice of such great excellence, ponder what I have to say. When the priest is about to give himself Communion in holy Mass, do you, keeping composed externally and internally, excite in your heart an act of true contrition, and humbly striking your breast, in token that you acknowledge yourself unworthy of so great a grace, make all those acts of love, of self-surrender, of humility, and the rest, which you are accustomed to make when you communicate sacramentally, and then desire with a lively longing to receive your good Jesus, veiled in the sacrament for your benefit. And to kindle your devotion, imagine that most holy Mary, or some saint, your holy advocate, is holding forth to you the sacred particle; figure yourself receiving it, and then, embracing Jesus in your heart, reply to Him, over and over again, with interior words prompted by love: “Come, Jesus, my Beloved, come within this my poor heart; come and satiate my desires; come and sanctify my soul; come, most sweet Jesus, come!” This said, be still; contemplate your good God within you, and, as if you really had communicated, adore Him, thank Him, and perform all those interior acts to which you are accustomed after sacramental Communion.

Here is a choice of a few different formal prayers to pray while following St Leonard's advice, though you can pray in your own words, if you prefer:

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**Act of Spiritual Communion**

by St Alphonsus Liguori (AD 1696-1787)

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.

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**Act of Spiritual Communion**

O Immaculate Queen of Heaven and Earth, Mother of God and Mediatrix of every grace: I believe that Thy dearly beloved Son, Our Lord Jesus Christ, is truly, really, and substantially contained in the Most Blessed Sacrament. I love Him above all things and I long to receive Him into my heart. Since I cannot now receive Him sacramentally, be so good as to place Him spiritually in my soul.

O my Jesus, I embrace Thee as One who has already come, and I unite myself entirely to Thee. Never permit me to be separated from Thee. Amen.

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**Act of Spiritual Communion**

As I cannot this day enjoy the happiness of assisting at the holy Mysteries, O my God! I transport myself in spirit at the foot of Thine altar; I unite with the Church, which by the hands of the priest, offers Thee Thine adorable Son in the Holy Sacrifice; I offer myself with Him, by Him, and in His Name. I adore, I praise, and thank Thee, imploring Thy mercy, invoking Thine assistance, and presenting Thee the homage I owe Thee as my Creator, the love due to Thee as my Savior.

Apply to my soul, I beseech Thee, O merciful Jesus, Thine infinite merits; apply them also to those for whom I particularly wish to pray. I desire to communicate spiritually, that Thy Blood may purify, Thy Flesh strengthen, and Thy Spirit sanctify me. May I never forget that Thou, my divine Redeemer, hast died for me; may I die to all that is not Thee, that hereafter I may live eternally with Thee. Amen.