

## Spiritual Communion

**St. Thomas Aquinas** defined Spiritual Communion as “an ardent desire to receive Jesus in the Holy Sacrament and a loving embrace as though we had already received Him.”

The basis of this practice was explained by **Pope St. John Paul II** in his encyclical, *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*:

‘In the Eucharist, "unlike any other sacrament, the mystery [of Holy Communion] is so perfect that it brings us to the heights of every good thing: Here is the ultimate goal of every human desire, because here we attain God and God joins himself to us in the most perfect union."

‘Precisely for this reason it is good to cultivate in our hearts a constant desire for the sacrament of the Eucharist. This was the origin of the practice of "spiritual communion," which has happily been established in the Church for centuries and recommended by saints who were masters of the spiritual life. **St. Teresa of Jesus** wrote: "When you do not receive communion and you do not attend Mass, you can make a spiritual communion, which is a most beneficial practice; by it the love of God will be greatly impressed on you" [The Way of Perfection, Ch. 35]

‘Thus, the passionate desire for God, whom the saints have seen as the Sole Satisfier, and who in the Eucharist is the "summit and source of the Christian life", is at the root of this practice.

The experience of **St. Padre Pio** illustrates the compelling desire felt by the saints in the face of the drawing and attracting power of God's love:

“My heart feels as if it were being drawn by a superior force each morning just before uniting with Him in the Blessed Sacrament. I have such a thirst and hunger before receiving Him that it's a wonder I don't die of anxiety. I was hardly able to reach the Divine Prisoner in order to celebrate Mass. When Mass ended I remained with Jesus to render Him thanks. My thirst and hunger do not diminish

after I have received Him in the Blessed Sacrament, but rather, increase steadily. Oh, how sweet was the conversation I held with Paradise this morning. The heart of Jesus and my own, if you will pardon the expression, fused. They were no longer two hearts beating but only one. My heart disappeared as if it were a drop in the ocean.”

**St. Jean-Marie Vianney** compared spiritual communion to blowing on fire and embers that are starting to go out in order to make them burn again: “There are some who make a spiritual communion every day with blessed bread. If we are deprived of Sacramental Communion, let us replace it, as far as we can, by spiritual communion, which we can make every moment; for we ought to have always a burning desire to receive the good God. Communion is to the soul like blowing a fire that is beginning to go out, but that has still plenty of hot embers; we blow, and the fire burns again. After the reception of the Sacraments, when we feel ourselves slacken in the love of God, let us have recourse at once to spiritual communion. When we cannot go to the church, let us turn towards the tabernacle; no wall can shut us out from the good God.”

**St. Josemaría Escrivá** taught spiritual communions improve presence of God: "What a source of grace there is in spiritual Communion! Practise it frequently and you'll have more presence of God and closer union with him in your life." He also taught: "Do not neglect to say, “Jesus, I love you”, and make one spiritual communion, at least, each day, in atonement for all the profanations and sacrileges he suffers because he wants to be with us."

According to Catholic theologians, the value of a spiritual can be as great as Holy Communion itself. "Spiritual Communion, as St. Thomas Aquinas and St. Alphonsus Liguori teach, produces effects similar to Sacramental Communion, according to the dispositions with which it is made, the greater or less earnestness with which Jesus is desired, and the greater or less love with which Jesus is

welcomed and given due attention," (Stefano Manelli, O.F.M. Conv., S.T.D., *Jesus our Eucharistic Love*.)

"A special advantage of Spiritual Communion is that we can make it as often as we like — even hundreds of times a day — when we like — even late at night — and wherever we like — even in a desert, or up in an airplane" Fr. Stefano continued.

In 1983, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith declared that all the effects of Holy Communion can be received through spiritual communion for persons in the following situations:

- Those at priestless parishes;
- Those who are prevented from attending Eucharistic celebrations;
- The divorced and remarried;
- Those at the Protestant Lord's Supper.

According to the official Catholic handbook (enchiridion) for indulgences, "an Act of Spiritual Communion, according to any pious formula, is enriched with a partial indulgence."

It also specifically mentions this *Act of Spiritual Communion*, which was recommended by **St. Alphonsus Ligouri**:

‘My Jesus, I believe that you are in the Blessed Sacrament. I love you above all things, and I long for you in my soul. Since I cannot now receive you sacramentally, come at least spiritually into my heart. As though you have already come, I embrace you and unite myself entirely to you; never permit me to be separated from you. Amen.’

Cardinal Rafael Merry del Val composed this Spiritual Communion:

At Thy feet, O my Jesus, I prostrate myself and I offer Thee repentance of my contrite heart, which is humbled in its nothingness and in Thy holy presence. I adore

Thee in the Sacrament of Thy love, the ineffable Eucharist. I desire to receive Thee into the poor dwelling that my heart offers Thee. While waiting for the happiness of sacramental communion, I wish to possess Thee in spirit. Come to me, O my Jesus, since I, for my part, am coming to Thee! May Thy love embrace my whole being in life and in death. I believe in Thee, I hope in Thee, I love Thee. Amen. *Another examples of Spiritual Communions are:*

‘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, praise, 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 now 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.

‘I wish, Lord, to receive you with the purity, humility and devotion with which your most holy Mother received you, with the spirit and fervor of the saints’  
(**St. Josemaría Escrivá**)

**Holy Mary, Mother of the Eucharist**, pray for us, so that during these difficult times, when we are neither able to participate at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass in person nor receive Holy Communion, we may nevertheless remain fully united to Jesus Christ whom we adore and love wholeheartedly. We trust in him who has promised us to stay with each and every one of us until the end of the world. We firmly believe that He fulfills this wondrous promise in the Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar, in which He is fully present in his Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity, the source and summit of our Christian lives. Amen.