

SPIRITUAL COMMUNION

If a mouse were to eat a crumb of Holy Communion, the Body of Christ, the mouse would not receive any *grace*; it would not receive the *Life of Christ*. Like the mouse, it is also possible for us to swallow Holy Communion without receiving grace or the Life of Christ. We refer to this as receiving Communion *unworthily*. If I receive Communion unworthily, I might feel good about it, but there are all kinds of ways to feel good, and some of them are sinful. A good feeling is not the same as receiving the Life of Christ, His grace. In fact, receiving Holy Communion in mortal sin is committing another mortal sin, *sacrilege*.

To receive the Life of Christ, His grace, in Holy Communion, we must receive *worthily*, which means:

- (1) We must be baptized, faithful Catholics.
- (2) We must have serious (mortal) sins, if any, forgiven in the Sacrament of Penance (Confession).
- (3) We must fast for 1 hour before receiving Communion (no food or drink except water & medicine).

(1) To have *Communion* or *union with* Christ in this Sacrament, we must have union with the Catholic Church, the one Christ established with Himself as its head.

(2) If we have driven the Life of Christ out of our soul by serious (mortal) sin, we must have it restored through the Sacrament of Penance (Confession). Only then can we receive the grace of Holy Communion. Receiving the Body of Christ while in a state of serious sin is like putting food in the mouth of a dead body: it is not give any benefit, and is actually appalling. Remember that murder and robbery are not the only mortal sins: missing Mass without serious reason, physical intimacy outside of marriage, and contraception/sterilization are also mortal sins. Another way to look at it is that, to receive the grace of the Body of Christ in Holy Communion, we must recognize that our own bodies also belong to Christ.

(3) Fasting for an hour before receiving Holy Communion is to help us focus, at least for a short time, on the reality and importance of what we are about to do.

What if we are unable to receive Holy Communion? God knows that there may be times when we want to go to Mass and receive Communion, but are unable. People legitimately miss Mass for several reasons: if their health prevents them from going; if long weekend work hours prevent them from going; and if there is no place to go to Mass, as in the current State of Illinois forced shutdown of churches.

At such times, there is another way to receive the grace of Holy Communion: we can make what is called a **SPIRITUAL COMMUNION**. According to the Catechism of the Council of Trent, the faithful who “receive the Eucharist in spirit [are] those who, inflamed with a lively faith that works in charity, partake in wish and desire of the celestial Bread offered to them, [and] receive from it, if not the entire, at least very great benefits.” When we are prevented from receiving Holy Communion, if we take some time to pray, telling God of our faith in Him and love for Him, and our desire to receive Communion, He gives us some, if not all, of the grace of Communion. This is not to diminish the importance of actually receiving. But God knows our hearts and the circumstances of our lives. He knows when we truly cannot receive Communion, and He will give us at least some of the grace of Communion if we devoutly ask Him.

SPIRITUAL COMMUNION PRAYER OF ST. ALPHONSUS LIGOURI

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.