



MATER MISERICORDIÆ CATHOLIC CHURCH

An Apostolate of the Priestly Fraternity of Saint Peter

March 23, 2020

Dear Faithful of Mater Misericordiæ Parish,

In this troubling time, you should know that God and His Church have not abandoned you. Even with the prohibition of public Mass and Communion Services, there are still many sources of grace which are open to you. I would like to discuss two of them here – Spiritual Communion and the General Fruits of the Mass.

Following the teachings of the Catechism of the Council of Trent¹ (also known as the Roman Catechism), there are three ways in which one can receive Communion:

(1) Sacramentally-only; (2) Sacramentally-and-Spiritually; and (3) Spiritually-only.

Those who receive Communion while knowing they are in a state of Mortal Sin are said to receive Sacramentally-only. This is because, while they truly receive the Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity of Christ under the appearances of bread and wine, they do not receive any spiritual benefits. On the contrary, they incur an additional sin.

Those who receive Communion Sacramentally-and-Spiritually receive the Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity of Christ under the appearances of bread and wine and do receive spiritual benefits.

Those who receive Communion Spiritually-only receive the spiritual benefits of Communion without receiving the Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity of Christ under the appearances of bread and wine.

The Catechism goes on to explain that those who receive Spiritually-only “are those who, inflamed with a lively faith which worketh by charity (Gal. 5:6), partake in wish and desire of that celestial bread.” There are several things that should be noted from this passage.

The first is that in order to receive Spiritually-only, one must be in a state of grace as the theological virtue of charity and Sanctifying Grace always exist together. So, one must have Sanctifying Grace, or be in a state of grace, in order to make a Spiritual Communion. If you are not in a state of grace, receive sacramental absolution as soon as you can (and be praying Acts of Contrition in the meantime). As noted previously, we will still be offering Confession at Mater at the indicated times.

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¹. Part II: The Sacraments – The Eucharist

Next, it is important to note that a Spiritual Communion must include a wish and desire to receive Sacramentally-and-Spiritually even though such a reception at the current time is not possible. It would be enough, then, when beginning to make a Spiritual Communion to pray “Lord, I wish to receive in a sacramental and fruitful Communion, but, as I can’t right now, I wish to receive You spiritually,” and then continue to pray as you would when receiving Sacramentally-and-Spiritually. There are prayers which are recommended by the Church for making a Spiritual Communion, which I have included at the end. They do not necessarily need to be used, and one can draw phrases and ideas from them, based on one’s own dispositions, to prepare one’s own.

Spiritual Communions can be made at any time during the day or night, and as many times as one wants. One does not need to be in a church, in front of the Tabernacle, or even in front of a holy image. Spiritual Communions can be made anywhere, although clearly, it would be unfitting to make them in places ill-suited for virtue.

We should not worry that our sanctification is in some way impeded by receiving Spiritually-only and not Sacramentally-and-Spiritually during this time. As the Catechism states, those who receive Spiritually-only “receive, if not the entire [spiritual benefit of a Sacramental-and-Spiritual Communion], at least very great fruits.” So, the graces received from Spiritual-only Communions can be as great as the graces received in a Sacramental-and-Spiritual Communion.

But, in order to receive as many graces and fruits from a Spiritual Communion as one can, or even from a Sacramental-and-Spiritual Communion, one must be properly disposed. The better disposed one is, the more graces one is able to receive. To properly dispose oneself, one should pray preparatory prayers before receiving Sacramentally-and-Spiritually. These prayers can be found in hand Missals and elsewhere, or one could pray using one’s own words. How long one should spend praying such prayers will depend on the other duties one has to fulfill. This is why it is important to arrive with time before the start of Mass so that one can pray these prayers, if one is planning on receiving (remember that one is only required to receive Communion sacramentally once a year from the First Sunday of Lent to Trinity Sunday in these United States). One could also pray these prayers at home before departing for the church if doing them at the church would be difficult. To make a Spiritual Communion fruitful, one should dispose oneself in the same manner, adjusting the texts of the prayers as necessary. Preparations before receiving either Sacramentally-and-Spiritually or Spiritually-only should include some form of an Act of Contrition.

We know, however, that we attend Mass for more than just receiving Communion. When we attend Mass, we give God the worship due to Him as our Creator and our Redeemer by offering up to Him in an unbloody manner the bloody Sacrifice of Christ on the Cross. The two-fold Consecration of the bread and wine makes the Sacrifice of the Cross sacramentally present. As Christ’s Sacrifice is present, the fruits from that Sacrifice are made available to the faithful. These fruits are placed in four groups – (1) Ministerial Fruits, (2) Very Special Fruits, (3) Special Fruits, and (4) General Fruits.

The Ministerial Fruits are those fruits which are offered to those on whose behalf the Priest is celebrating the Mass. The intention listed in the bulletin for the Mass, for example, would be the recipient of these fruits (if the intention is one who can receive them).

The Very Special Fruits are those which are offered to the celebrating Priest Himself. As he is offering the Sacrifice of the Mass *in persona Christi* for others and for himself, these fruits are made available to him.

The Special Fruits are those offered to those who are cooperating in offering up the Sacrifice of the Mass by any external act (besides the Priest). This cooperation includes being physically present at Mass, but also by contributing materially to the celebration of the Mass. Those who have donated flowers, candles, vestments, liturgical vessels, and other such things being using in a Mass – including the church building itself – are all offered Special Fruits from that Mass. The amount of fruit offered to each is proportional “to their closeness of cooperation”² to the Sacrifice. So, the Altar Server in the Sanctuary will be offered more Special Fruits than that which will be offered to those in the pews.

Note, however, that there is a difference between the fruits being offered and the fruits received. The amount that is received is dependent upon one’s disposition. So, while the Altar Server might be offered more fruits, he may receive less than some in the pews as they, while offered less, were better disposed and thus actually received more than the Server. This is why, again, prayers of preparation before Mass are so important, not just for the reception of Communion, but also for receiving the fruits that will be made available and for worthily offering the Sacrifice of the Mass through the hands of the Priest.

Lastly there are the General Fruits. These fruits are offered to all members of the Church, and even to those outside of the Church for their conversion. In order to gain these fruits, again, one must be properly disposed. This is why morning prayers and offerings are so important and why one should include in one’s morning prayers words to the effect of “Lord, during the course of this day, bestow upon me any Indulgences whose requirements I may fulfil and all fruits available to me flowing from all of the Masses said throughout the world today.” As Masses will continue to be said privately during this time, you should avail yourselves of these General Fruits which are produced. Additionally, if you feel that you qualify for Special Fruits due to any contributions you may have made, be sure to ask for those fruits also.

Hopefully you are able to see that the practices explained above are not to be used only during this unhappy time. These lessons should be integrated into the spiritual life of every Christian so that each may draw from all of the abundant sources of grace available to him.

Please know that Fr. Passo and I are praying for you and for a quick and happy outcome to the current situation.

May Our Lord bless you and Our Lady keep,

In Christ,
Fr. William Rock, FSSP
Assistant Pastor

². O’Connell, The Celebration of the Mass (1964), p. 39, n. 6.

St. Alphonsus Liguori:

“My Jesus, I believe that you are present in the most Blessed Sacrament. I love You above all things and I desire to receive You into my soul. Since I cannot now 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.”

Rafael Merry del Val:

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.

Classic:

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. Amen.

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.

Classic:

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.³

³. Prayers taken from: <https://wdtprs.com/2020/03/stuck-because-of-covid-19-how-to-make-a-spiritual-communion/>