

# SPIRITUAL Communion

Pope Francis, after reciting a livestreamed Angelus prayer last week, told people, “United to Christ we are never alone, but instead form one body, of which he is the head. It is a union that is nourished with prayer and also with spiritual communion in the Eucharist, a practice that is recommended when it isn’t possible to receive the sacrament.”

Communion is the way to participate most fully in the Mass, but it is not always possible for everyone to receive at every Mass, nor do many Catholics in the world even have regular access to Mass.

The idea of “spiritual Communion” — inviting Jesus into one’s heart and soul when receiving the actual sacrament isn’t possible — is part of Catholic tradition.

In countries where Catholics can and do receive the sacrament frequently, they do not hear the term “spiritual Communion” very often, but it has been mentioned even in recent church documents.

The Vatican’s preparatory document for the 2012 International Eucharistic Congress in Dublin said those who cannot receive the Eucharist can have spiritual Communion, declaring their desire to receiving the Eucharist and uniting “their suffering of that moment with the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.”

The working document for the Synod of Bishops on the Eucharist in 2005 addressed the idea of offering up the sacrifice of being unable to receive Communion.

It said: “Spiritual Communion, for example, is always possible for elderly persons and the sick who cannot go to church. In manifesting their love for the Eucharist, they participate in the communion of saints with great spiritual benefit for themselves and the church. By offering their sufferings to God, the church is enriched.”

In “Sacramentum Caritatis,” the document Pope Benedict XVI issued in 2007 reflecting on the synod, he cautioned people against thinking they had “a right or even an obligation” to receive the Eucharist every time they went to Mass.

“Even in cases where it is not possible to receive sacramental Communion, participation at Mass remains necessary, important, meaningful and fruitful. In such circumstances it is beneficial to cultivate a desire for full union with Christ through the practice of spiritual Communion,” Benedict wrote. *(Adapted from National Catholic Reporter)*

**1 Make an act of faith**  
Come up with your own prayer or use a traditional one to express to the Lord our faith in his real presence in the Eucharist.

**2 Make an act of love**  
Say a prayer that expresses your love and gratitude to the Lord. Thank Him for his infinite love as well.

**4 steps for Spiritual Communion**  
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**3 Express your desire to receive him**  
As you are not able to physically receive the Lord, express your desire to receive Him in your heart.

**4 Invite Jesus to come into your heart**  
With a humble and contrite heart we ask the Lord to come to us just as He would if we were able to receive the sacrament.

## An Act of Spiritual Communion

In the 1700s, St. Alphonsus Liguori wrote a special prayer for spiritual communion:

*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.*