

PERFECT CONTRITION AND SPIRITUAL COMMUNION

With the restriction of public gatherings to slow the spread of the COVID-19 virus, the public celebration of the Mass has had to be suspended and many Lenten penance services have had to be cancelled. At the same time, if you need to isolate yourself or have been quarantined because of the COVID-19 virus, you are unlikely to be able to receive the sacraments normally. And so, the question arises, **“What do I do if I cannot go to Confession or receive Holy Communion because of the COVID-19 virus?”** In these circumstances there are devotions that enable you to receive forgiveness of your sins (under certain conditions) and the consolation of the grace of the Holy Eucharist. These devotions have been encouraged by the Church in times of great distress and have been practiced by the saints.

How to Make an Act of Perfect Contrition:

The Catechism describes contrition as, *“sorrow of the soul and detestation for the sin committed, together with the resolution not to sin again.”* Perfect contrition, however, goes beyond this and *“arises from a love by which God is loved above all else.”* The Catechism tells us that perfect contrition even, *“obtains the forgiveness of mortal sins if it includes the firm resolution to have recourse to sacramental confession as soon as possible.” CCC 1452.* And so, although the only ordinary way to receive absolution is through sacramental reconciliation, through an act of perfect contrition you can receive the forgiveness of your sins outside of confession, even mortal sins, provided that you are firmly resolved to reform your life and intend to go to sacramental confession as soon as possible, when it becomes available.

Perfect contrition is a grace from God, therefore it is important to sincerely ask that this gift be granted to you. In your prayer, approach God, asking, “My God, please grant me the perfect contrition for my sins”.

1. In reality or in your mind kneel at the foot of a crucifix and mentally repeat: “Jesus, my God and my Savior, in the midst of your passion on the cross, you suffered for me and gave your life to purify me from my sins”.

2. Keeping in mind the great love that the Lord Jesus demonstrated on the cross for you, call to mind your sins. Now, out of love for God, express your sorrow to the Lord, and express your regret for them. Then promise the Lord, that, with his help, you firmly resolve no longer sin.

3. Then, recite, slowly and sincerely, an act of contrition focusing on the goodness of God and your love for Jesus:

O my God, I am heartily sorry for having offended Thee, and I detest all my sins because of thy just punishments, but most of all because they offend Thee, my God, who art all good and deserving of all my love. I firmly resolve with the help of Thy grace to sin no more and to avoid the near occasion of sin. Amen.

4. Make a firm resolution to go to sacramental confession as soon as possible.

How to Make a Spiritual Communion:

St. Teresa of Avila 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.*

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.”

To make an act of spiritual communion follow the following steps:

1. If you are aware that you have committed mortal sins, make an act of perfect contrition.

2. Imagine the sacred words and actions of the Mass, or watch them online or on TV.

3. Sincerely express in your heart your desire to God to receive Our Lord truly present in the Holy Eucharist.

4. Recite this prayer of Alphonsus de Liguori.:

My Jesus, I believe that you are present in the most Holy Eucharist. 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.

6. Express in your heart your gratitude to God for the gift the Lord gave us in his Body and Blood offered for our salvation.