

APPENDIX FOR STUDY GUIDE

WHAT IS SPIRITUAL COMMUNION?

What is a Spiritual Communion? It is desiring to receive Holy Communion when we are not able to actually do so. Of course we should not make a Spiritual Communion to replace an actual Holy Communion. The advantage of a Spiritual Communion is that we can make it as often as we like.

One may wonder about the value of this practice. St. Catherine of Siena (1347-1380) was afraid that a Spiritual Communion was nothing compared to a Sacramental Communion. In a vision of Our Lord she saw Him hold up two ciboria (the vessel which contains the Sacred Hosts) and say, "In this golden ciborium I put your Sacramental Communion. In this silver ciborium I put your Spiritual Communion. Both ciboria are quite pleasing to Me."

I would like to recommend a beautiful prayer written by St. Alphonsus Liguori (1696-1787) for making your Spiritual Communion. St. Alphonsus taught that a Spiritual Communion produces effects in our souls similar to a Sacramental Communion according to the dispositions with which it is made. The greater the desire for Jesus and the greater love with which Jesus is welcomed the greater the graces received.

How appropriate to begin this practice as we start the Advent Season. The Jewish people yearned for the coming of the Messiah. We yearn for people we love when they are absent. Let us spend this season yearning for Jesus so that on Christmas Day He may not only be born in a stable but also into our hearts. We can express this yearning by making many Spiritual Communion.

Spiritual Communion Prayer

My Jesus, I believe that Thou are truly present in the Blessed Sacrament. I love Thee above all things and I desire Thee in my soul. Since I cannot now receive Thee sacramentally, come at least spiritually into my heart. (Pause) I embrace Thee as being already there and unite myself wholly to Thee. Never permit me to be separated from Thee. Amen.

DO YOU ATTEND OR ASSIST – by James M. Hahn

Over the course of the past year many Catholic individuals and groups have been calling for change in the Church. Many of them have suggested the idea of the faithful refraining from attending Mass. Their intention is to show the Church they want change by dropping attendance, which in turn will hurt the Church financially.

I must echo this call. I too ask all Catholics to stop attending Mass. It is my dream that every Catholic in the world would no longer attend Mass. However, my reason for this lofty dream is far removed from the ideology of those now calling for

change. The universal Catechism states that the first precept of the Church is that, “the faithful should attend mass on Sundays and Holydays of obligation.” I know what this statement means. However, if one specific word is changed there could be a world of difference. The Baltimore Catechism states essentially the same thing except that the word “attend” is replaced with the word “assist”.

There is a world of difference between the words attend and assist. When I attend events I look on patiently waiting to be entertained in some fashion. When I assist I provide a service to others. I can attend concerts, sporting events, graduation ceremonies, and movie previews. I can assist at food banks, homeless shelters, hospitals, and charity events. I would never think of attending a food bank nor would I consider assisting at a concert unless I was a musician.

How then can I stop attending Mass and begin assisting? First, I must prepare myself to celebrate this sacred mystery. This preparation involves turning away from sin. Most priests make themselves available for confession on Saturday afternoons for 45 minutes to one hour - with minimal participation. Have I become more holy or have I been blinded to my own sinfulness that I don't take more advantage of this opportunity. In order to assist at Mass I must cleanse myself inside and out so that I may present myself as the spotless bride, the Church, to Christ.

Second, assisting at Mass involves more than merely hearing the Word of God. Great musicians and athletes do not participate in their respective events without preparation. They prepare so that they might fully participate in the event. I too should prepare for Mass by arriving early to pray and read through the readings. This familiarity frees my mind to delve deeper into what Christ is saying to me. In order to assist at Mass I must be spiritually prepared to fully participate by studying and reading the scriptures and the order of the Mass.

Finally, assisting at Mass means more than warming a bench. The Mass is a sacrifice of praise and I must bring a gift or many gifts to be sacrificed on the altar. I must bring my family, friends, work, joys, sorrows, sufferings, worries, and dreams and lay them before God on the altar. My sacrifices are represented in a small way by the gift of money, bread, and wine. However, as the gifts are being brought forward to the altar my heart should be bringing my entire life before the Lord. As the gifts are handed to the priest I should be handing him spiritually all that I am - good and bad. In order to assist at Mass I must make a conscious, spiritual, emotional, physical gift of myself to God. In return for my full participation God will give me nothing less than Himself.

Contrary to popular opinion the Mass is not a spectator sport. It is not for quotas or to fill pews. The Mass and the Church will continue until the end of time regardless of the number of people in the pews. We are not benchwarmers. We are a chosen people. We are priests, prophets, and kings destined to proclaim the death of the Lord Jesus until He comes in glory.

The Mass is my opportunity to stand at the foot of the Cross, say I am sorry, and unite myself fully to Jesus, His sufferings, and His Church. I plead with all Catholics to stop attending Mass. I ask every Catholic in the world to resolve to never attend Mass again! Let us however start assisting at Mass. Let us get so involved in the Mass that we truly see it for what it is, heaven on earth.