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HOLY

COMMUNION

Daniel A. Lord, S.J.

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THE QUEEN'S WORK, INC.

# *Preparation for* **Holy Communion**

*By* DANIEL A. LORD, S.J.

## *God Comes to Give*

**G**OD IS AS GENEROUS as we will let Him be. Christ our Savior gives us the blessings and the gifts that we are ready and willing to take.

That is true today.

It has always been true. If people were willing to receive the Savior, He came to them with miracles and words of endless, boundless power. If they were preoccupied with other things and other people, He had to pass them by. Because of their lack of faith the hands He held out seemed powerless for miracles, and the words He spoke to them did not even reach their ears.

Christ was always a gentleman . . . so He found it hard to force Himself or His gifts on anyone who was reluctant to receive them. A little faith however, a little interest in Him, in what He said or what He had come to do . . . and He was lavish in His return. A little curiosity on the part of Zacheus . . . and the Lord dined and spent the night in the house of this pariah, this outside-the-law tax broker.

Christ knew He was welcome in the house of Lazarus and his gracious sisters, Mary and Martha. So He came to make it His refuge against the brutal and myopic priests and people who had no time (in the literal and colloquial meaning of time) for Him. In

return for a few quiet visits to their house in Bethany, Christ raised Lazarus in a miracle that was a forerunner of His own Resurrection, released Mary from the slavery of seven devils, and placed Martha in the fair catalogue of those first Christian virgins.

## *Routine Can Be Ruinous*

**H**OLY COMMUNION HAS BECOME the blessed common practice of our age. Pope Pius X, of almost sacramental memory, brought back the ancient practice of the Church—to the joy of the Catholic world and the salvation of millions.

Yet recurrently we who frequently receive Holy Communion must pause to ask: "Why has the constant coming of the Eucharistic Savior into my heart so little effect upon me? Why is it that my constantly consorting with God is so utterly commonplace?"

I know groups of thoughtful priests and laymen who wonder wistfully whether frequent Communion might not be a mottled blessing. People dash in to church, receive Holy Communion, dash out—with hardly a bob, much less a faithful genuflection of body and soul, to the Savior. It would seem that custom can stale even Communion.

On God's part the flow of grace is as strong and ready as is the generosity of the Savior.

Can it be that those who receive Holy Communion tie the hands of the Lord? Do they block off His generosity, stifle with yawns and apathy the eagerness that would make Holy Communion the quick and certain and joyous road to highest virtue and startling heroism?

The sad fact is that habit can make the most beautiful association in the world seem flat and stale and can turn an exquisite friendship into something routine and commonplace.

Habit can have either of two effects: It can make us do extremely well the thing that we do over and over again, or it can sour or spoil that thing because of the hazy, sodden slovenliness in which we come to do it.

Either of these effects can be the result of frequent Holy Communion.

### *Three Precious Days*

**S**T. ALOYSIUS SET A PATTERN for Holy Communion that was held up to the youngsters of my youth.

For him each Holy Communion was the center of a three-day cycle:

One day before Holy Communion he spent in preparation.

The day of Holy Communion was for him a day of reverent, almost cloistered joy.

One day after Holy Communion he spent in thanksgiving.

It would seem that for some the three days have been cut down to a matter of three minutes.

Several years ago I wrote a booklet called "Thanksgiving After Holy Communion." The booklet came off the press in February of 1934; to date more than 160,000 copies of it have reached my Catholic friends. I am grateful, and I prayerfully hope that the minutes after Holy Communion have become more precious and more profitable to them.

But what of the preparation for Holy Communion?

Those moments may not be so intimately dear or so personally sacred . . . and perhaps the success of our Holy Communion depends upon those moments even more than it does upon the moments that follow. Indeed it is a question just how successful thanksgiving after Holy Communion can be if the preparation has been lacking or been made carelessly.

### *We Get Ready for the Great*

**I**T IS A COMMONPLACE of good manners to get ready for the coming of a guest. It may be a matter of simple purchases and a swift straightening of the house before the arrival of near relatives.

It may be the fairly elaborate preparations for the coming of a distinguished person to our home.

The family is in a flurry when the rich uncle announces that he will take Thanksgiving dinner with them. The dinner is extra special; the children are scrubbed and instructed to put on their best behavior; the house shines with the results of elbow-grease.

The young wife is all excitement and valorous labor over the simply perfect dinner that must be served on the simply perfectly appointed dinner table to her husband's boss.

The town snaps out its banners, gracefully drapes its colors, cleans up its streets, and hides away its dirty or criminal elements when the President or a famous general is expected to ride along its boulevards.

The city washes its face, polishes up its parks and its police, tunes its bands, and

puffs forth its best oratory when it plays host to an important national convention.

And when in Holy Communion the King comes to visit us . . . ?

Into our souls walks the Christ of Nazareth, history's most outstanding personality.

Briefly the King of Kings sits upon the throne of our hearts.

Christ our elder brother arrives for a happy homecoming.

The God of the universe seems to shrink His vast domain to the tiny pin point that is myself as He concentrates the whole of His divine interest upon me and what is mine.

## *A Matter of Faith*

**I**T IS ALL A MATTER OF FAITH. If we do not believe all about Christ in Holy Communion, what remains of this pamphlet means not a thing. If we do believe it, no other guest in my life or in the life of anyone in history is more worthy of honor and preparation, no other guest more gracious, rich, loving, distinguished.

I welcome the one who came to Mary at the Incarnation. I am the wise innkeeper who does not turn away the Babe of Bethlehem. I am one of the shepherds opening my warm coat to the Infant. I am that Egypt that welcomed in flight the divine refugee. I am Joseph the carpenter taking the Son of God under my roof. I am Peter and Lazarus making Christ the honored visitor of my home . . . and Joseph of Arimathea giving the sacrificed Savior rest in the sepulcher of my breast.

I am the sorrowful Mother taking Jesus in my arms after the sacrifice of Calvary; I am the owner of the Cenacle, welcoming the master to the Last Supper in my house.

All this is simply a matter of faith.

Yet very importantly it is a matter of pausing to take in, grip firmly, and actuate that faith. It is a series of somethings that require thought — prayerful, devotional thought.

### *Faith Can Sleep*

**F**AITH CAN BE PRESENT in the soul and yet be strangely asleep. I can know that the Eucharist is the body and blood of my Savior . . . and give Him and that glorious truth scarcely a thought.

I can drowse through Mass, to be awakened by the tinkle of the bell and the realization (a blend of start and yawn) that in a few minutes I shall be going up to the Communion rail and receiving my Lord.

I can take the King into a kingdom totally unready for Him. I can play host with no sign of preparation for the divine guest. I can bid the Lord enter a messy soul, offer Him the congested squalor of a heart already occupied with stale, smelly memories and the reluctant ghosts of yesterday.

Jesus comes willing to make my Holy Communion a cause of joy and the opportunity for glorious graces. But if my soul is not ready to receive Him, I leave Him practically helpless. My hands are too full of trifles for me to grasp His riches. My house is too resonant with echoes for me to hear His voice. I am so bad a spiritual



housekeeper or manager that He has no place to sit in my house.

Without some preparation it takes a lot of quick thinking and frenzied rearranging on my part to make up—after His arrival—for the dust and dirt, the cobwebs and trash, the echoing chatter and the resonant murmurs of my cluttered soul.

Many a thanksgiving after Holy Communion is a matter of, "Pardon me, Lord, While I put my house in order. . . . Please, Lord, see whether you can find a place to wait while I get myself adjusted. . . . There were a lot of things I wanted to talk over with you, but for the life of me I cannot on the spur of the moment recall what they were. . . . Will you kindly wait, divine guest, till I get rid of this junk that litters my mind? Then I'll be back to talk with you."

It is a matter of faith.

It is a matter of pausing to think.

But mostly it is a matter of plain (but rare) common sense and common decency.

We should do for our divine guest what we would do for any other guest. . . . surely not less. . . . certainly much more.

### *Attention, Please!*

**W**HEN WE HAVE NOT PREPARED for the coming of the Lord in the Eucharist, we are the losers, the dreadful losers. The precious minutes of His visit are few and, as no poet has ever been able to describe, frighteningly fleeting. We miss so much if we have to remind ourselves only after His arrival that "the Lord is here and calls for you."

We should be ready and watching and waiting.

Our thanksgiving will certainly be vastly better if our preparation is even a little better. Our thanksgiving will probably be very good if our preparation was thoughtful, prayerful, and intelligently devoted. God can do wonders. We must constantly and voluntarily cooperate.

“Behold, I stand at the door and knock.”

Most of us who go to Holy Communion are convinced that we open the barred door to welcome the divine visitor.

But the mere opening of a door does not make for hospitality. We have not welcomed a guest if we have faced Him wordless and with a blank mind.

We are certainly poor hosts or hostesses if we have nothing to say to our divine guest and not a thing prepared for His comfort. We are hardly cordial if we invite Him into a soul that is an “old curiosity shop” of yesterday’s affairs and last night’s partying and the remembered words of other friends and the whirling plans for today and the clangorous clatter of a world that streams through windows left indiscriminately open.

When we go to Holy Communion, it is the King who waits our attention.

How smart we are if we attend!

## *Confession As Preparation*

**C**ONFESSION IS THE MERCIFUL and reassuring method by which Christ forgives me my sins and lets me know by the spoken words of His representative that I have been forgiven. The priest’s act of absolution forgives my sin. I joyously hear and know the happy fact.

The confessional is the divine physician's consultation room, where I get the spiritual advice, treatment, and medicine that keep my soul in a state of robust health. Fortunate the penitent who wants all this. Blessed the penitent who finds a priest ready and able effectively to give it.

Confession is the prophylactic against sin, the strengthener against my weaknesses, not merely a cure for sins committed but a prevention of sins that might have overthrown me.

But confession is also something else: It is a direct way by which to prepare for the coming of the Eucharistic Christ.

You who try so hard to avoid serious sin sometimes find confession a bit of a chore. It seems almost a little purposeless. You have only minor sins to confess, those sins that can be forgiven through an act of contrition without confession. Sins repeated because of the frailty of character make confession a monochrome affair, dull and often dishearteningly drab.

Perhaps you have been told to use confession for advice. But this time you have no problems; there are no impending ills overhanging your soul; you hardly feel the prophylactic need of sacramental grace.

"Why go to confession when I have nothing to tell...and no advice to seek...and I hate to waste the confessor's time?"

If you have asked yourself those questions, so have thousands of other good people.

But confession can take quite a different turn and be a high light to new meaning—if you use it as preparation for Holy Communion.

Of course I must go to confession if there are serious sins upon my soul. Before I receive Holy Communion, the absolution of the priest and the hatred of sin that is my sorrow must drive out the prince of darkness. I cannot invite the prince of light and of peace to share the dwelling with His sworn enemy.

There must be the preparation of confession whenever mortal sin has established with the Devil a prior claim to my immortal soul.

### *Getting Ready Through Confession*

**B**UT WHEN ONLY VENIAL SIN is on the soul . . .

1. Confession is not obligatory before Holy Communion.

2. Confession to a regular confessor at least once every two weeks is the advice of those who know best the needs of the person who wishes to lead the good life.

3. Confession, properly used by a person who heartily cooperates after confession—and before it—strengthening old virtues and bringing new graces, can always be the immediate preparing of the soul for the coming of the Eucharistic King.

Confession makes us think back to the goodness and generosity of God, in which golden chain of blessings the Eucharist is a crown and climax.

As we examine our conscience, we recall our own unworthiness and humble ourselves before God's great generosity.

Our act of contrition and the consequent absolution of the priest brush away the venial sins that are the cobwebs and flecks

of dirt, the mud and grime, the stains and mildew of even slight sins.

The fresh sacramental grace gives to the soul an added strength and beauty, a new polish and shine, a decoration that makes the soul a little more fit to harbor the visiting majesty.

And all the time we have been preparing ourselves for confession, we have been thinking of the Word made flesh that became the flesh taking the appearance of bread. We have been turning toward the Savior, who is approaching to ask admission. We have been readying ourselves for the proper reception of the King, who comes to ask hospitality of one of His servants and who rates the best hospitality that can be given Him.

Indeed we can put all this in the form of a prayer, the following words (or our own words that rise from the spontaneous purposes of what we do):

“Blessed Savior, I make this confession so that I may be a little better prepared for your Eucharistic coming. I should hate to offer you a soul spotted and soiled with venial sin and dirtied by unforgiven offenses. Remove even my slightest sins, all that make me mean, small, repulsive, ugly. I should want for your arrival to be filled with grace as your Mother was at the Incarnation, as the saints were when they opened their souls to welcome you. Give me the grace, the strength, and the common sense to cooperate in order that I may make my soul a little more fit to shelter you, to offer you warmth and hospitality and a safe refuge and a happy home.

“I make my confession as a direct preparation for the Communions that will follow.”

## *New Dress*

**T**HE ELABORATE PREPARATIONS for first Holy Communion, expressed in the little boys' fresh suits and the shining white of the girls' dresses and veils, are not concessions to youthful vanity or parental pride.

They have a deep, almost sacramental meaning.

Here are outward signs by which we dress the body of innocence to indicate the beauty of the guiltless soul clad in sanctifying grace.

New clothes and brightly polished shoes, white gloves and gay ties are reminders to the first communicants that this is a most impressive and important occasion, that they are showing to the divine guest the good manners and courtesy that well-bred people always give a distinguished visitor. They put on their best clothes to play hosts and hostesses to the Eucharistic God. It is a banquet that they are to attend, a heavenly party to which they have been invited, and it is only right and correct that they wear their party clothes.

Of course the divine Savior, who touched tenderly the corrupt bodies of the lepers and lifted to His breast the already corrupting dead and put His arms around the crawling, ragged beggars of Oriental highways, is not likely to be a stickler for clothes.

We could all be sure of the gladness of the Savior as He came after battle to the muddied, begrimed, powder-blackened soldiers who knelt in the rain to receive Holy Communion. Certainly Christ would rather have us come in rags than not at all, would have us come soiled and bedraggled rather than standing afar off. Our guiltless lack of

proper dress would never, should never hold us from the Eucharistic Christ.

The Savior must deeply love those people who come to early Mass at the end of a long, messy night's work, printer's ink on their fingers . . . the mud of a policeman's beat on their boots. He must welcome mothers and maids and bakers and sailors who hurriedly slip into the first thing they can find in order that they might run to church to receive Him.

Yet this is the King.

Dressing for His reception can be a real preparation for Holy Communion.

Modesty should of course be the characteristic.

The man lifts a freshly shaved face to welcome the Savior. A minimum of cosmetics and a maximum of neatness and cleanliness go together.

A clean and shining face can be the symbol of a clean and shining spirit.

Neat and orderly garments can give a hint of the care expressed by a neat and orderly soul.

(This note because some people worry unnecessarily about it: You may clean your teeth and gargle before you receive Holy Communion; it is well if you do.)

You can make the routine business of dressing a dramatic preparation for the reception to which you are hurrying.

"This day I dress to welcome my God," you say. "My soul is, I hope, clad in grace. My body I now clothe in modesty and cleanliness, the neat, correct garments that are among your gifts to me. May I wear, dear Lord, the wedding garment that admits me to your feast."

## *Five Minutes Before Mass*

**T**HE FIVE MINUTES just before Mass begins can be very precious. During that time we make our intention for Mass and point our thoughts to the sacrifice and the sacrament; the Eucharist, we recall, is both.

“Lord God, I offer up for the following intentions the Mass at which I shall be present.” You pause and mention your special intentions—for the living, for the dead, for the Church, for the world, for yourself and your needs. “Today I shall offer to your Triune Majesty the Eucharistic sacrifice, and I shall be a sharer in the Eucharistic banquet. Together with the priest I offer up this Mass and Holy Communion for the great intentions for which Christ my Savior established the Mass: in sorrow for sin, in praise and love of your greatness, in thanksgiving for your magnificent gifts, in petition for your favors.”

Then you plan just what you will say to the Savior present in your heart, what you will discuss with Him, and what you will do to make His coming memorable.

By the time the priest starts Mass, you have already prepared yourself to be one with Him and the high priest, one with the guest who will come to do great things in you.

## *Mass Is the Great Preparation*

**H**OLY COMMUNION is, as we have heard time out of mind, an essential part of Mass. Holy Communion is not a separate, a distinct thing. It is the great sacrament of love that flows directly from the great sacrifice of love. It is the banquet that follows the sacrifice itself. In the ancient



Jewish religion, established and approved by God, the worshipers partook of the sacrificial meat. They offered up the lamb of the Passover and then consumed the lamb in their family feast. The animals offered in the Temple—except those offered in the holocausts—were often returned to priest and people in the holy banquets of the united Jewish race.

The essential parts of the sacrifice of the Mass are, we recall:

The Offering of the Elements of Bread and Wine.

The Consecration and Mystical Sacrifice of the Divine Victim.

The Sacrificial Banquet.

It follows logically then that the perfect preparation for Holy Communion is the offering up of the Mass.

So when a Catholic unites himself with the human priest and Christ the high priest, uses his missal prayerfully and attentively, or with or without the missal moves along devoutly with the progress of the divine action of the Mass, he has placed himself in the most perfect disposition to receive the high priest of the Mass, the sacrifice's victim, the banquet's beloved host.

The whole Mass leads logically to the reception of Christ in Holy Communion.

We begin with a great act of sorrow and a sincere expression of our own unworthiness.

We speak with the angels the glory of the Lord.

We pray the saints, who so loved the Eucharistic King in the flesh, the Eucharist, and His glorified vision, to be with us in the solemn act we are about to perform.

We listen to the Apostles, who knew Him well, and to the saints of the Old Law, who saw Him in type and prophecy.

We walk again with Him in the miracles and the parables, the trials, the Passion, and the glory of His Gospel.

A great act of faith includes the faith in this divine mystery which is now our blessed concentration.

Then we offer to God the elements of bread and wine. Together they are sufficient to sustain life. Now they become the symbols of the life they sustain. We give them to God, asking Him to accept them as a sign of human unity and peace, a sign that we present to Him ourselves and our lives in total submission to His will. We beg that through the miracle of His power He will give back to us the bread and the wine made into the body and the blood of His beloved Son.

We symbolically wash our fingers and beg God to wash our souls from guilt.

With the priest we call upon the saints to pray with us, and we invite those who kneel there in church to unite with us, while in the solemn preface we join with the universal Church in the song that the angels sing for all eternity.

### *Our Prayers and the Priest's*

**P**LUNGED IN THE SILENCE of the canon, our souls come close to the heavens, which soon are to open and send down the Savior. Our prayers reach across the world, imploring God's mercy on the faithful, especially on those near and precious to our hearts. The priest's gestures recall those of the Savior at the Last Supper, and we, like the

devoted Apostles, watch and pray with beating hearts. Then the priest merges himself in the personality of the high priest. The actions are the precise actions of the Savior; the words are His words.

And behold, Christ is with us.

Here is Christ's great sacrifice of obedience and love.

The bread that was is now the body and the wine is now the blood of the Word made flesh. Together with the priest we lift them in gift to the Trinity. With this we lift our wills and our love. High in the air we raise the perfect repayment by which we give back to God His divine Son in return for the multiplied gifts He has given us.

Once more in the rich silence of the continued canon we call the saints about us, saying the prayers that were said in the catacombs by Christians who knelt near the tombs of the martyrs and dreamed of dying for their crucified King. The swift multiplication of crosses recalls Calvary's sacrifice, of which this is the unbloody reproduction. We say the prayer that the Lord ordered to be said.

Bowing our heads before so gracious and good a Savior, we cry out for pity from the Lamb of God.

We say the three lovely prayers that precede the Communion, and then in the voice of the centurion we confess our pitiful unworthiness to play host to the Savior but remind Him that He needs but speak the word and our souls will be made wholly sound and strong.

Again the confiteor admits our sad guilt, the priest calls down forgiveness upon our heads . . . and we move forward, prepared in

spirit, for the completion of the sacrifice through the sacramental banquet.

Wonder of wonders! God now gives back to us what seems to be the very bread and wine that earlier in the Mass we gave Him. But godlike, He multiplies our gift infinitely; for what we gave Him of wheat and grape, He now returns to us in the flesh and blood of the Incarnate Word.

### *One With the Holy Past*

**T**HROUGHOUT THE MASS we have been in obedience and love and the offering of the sacrifice one with the Apostles, who at the Last Supper moved forward with Christ through hymn and prayer, action and sacrifice to the banquet of their Lord.

We recall vividly the sacrifice of Calvary, when at the completion of the sacrifice the body of the Savior was laid in the arms of His Blessed Mother and then prepared tenderly for burial by the holy women and Joseph and Nicodemus and laid in the tomb.

We have lived again with Mary the joy of Mass in the upper room, with a priest who stood for us in place of her two sons Jesus and John.

We are back again in the catacombs, united with the historic Church, which found its strength in persecution and its promise of life beyond death in the Masses that were said upon the tombs of recently martyred saints.

We do what the universal Church has done throughout the centuries and is doing this day and shall do until the end of time for the saving of mankind and the joy of the world.

We have been one with Christ the priest in His words, in His intentions, in His actions, and in a final Holy Communion.

### *The Three Precommunion Prayers*

**T**HE THREE PRAYERS that the priest and the people say together just before the priest's communion deserve more than the rapid recital that is so often their fate.

Into these ancient prayers generations of saints and scholars packed such worlds of doctrine and devotion that we could use them as constant preparations for Holy Communion.

Let us read these prayers slowly and pause to consider the thoughts that lie closest to the surface of the words.

### *The First Prayer*

**O Lord Jesus Christ:**

Present upon the altar . . .

Soon to come to me . . .

**Who didst say to thine Apostles:**

At the Last Supper . . .

At this first Mass . . .

Despite the imminent threat of death and Calvary's apparent disaster . . .

When the Eucharist, God's great gift of love, was first presented to us . . .

**Peace I leave you, my peace I give you:**

Peace that belongs to the soul free from sin and from the hateful dominion of the Devil . . .

Peace that is the great characteristic of God's heaven . . .

Peace that is compounded of faith,  
hope, and love . . .

Peace that follows our acceptance  
of Christ's commandments and plan . . .

**Look not upon my sins:**

For which I am heartily sorry . . .

Against which I crave the strong  
protection of your Eucharistic presence . . .

**But upon the faith of thy Church:**

Which everywhere from the rising  
of the sun to the going down thereof is  
offering this holy sacrifice . . .

While millions of Catholics, filled  
with this strong faith, move forward to  
receive Holy Communion . . .

**And vouchsafe to grant her peace and  
unity according to thy will:**

Peace to do her work . . .

Unity that all may be one flock  
under one shepherd . . .

United in your Mystical Body as  
vine and branches . . .

Now made partakers of one bread  
and one chalice of salvation . . .

Which you so strongly willed in  
your prayers for the unity of all the world  
in one kingdom, one body, one bread . . .

**Who livest and reignest God, world  
without end. Amen:**

In heaven . . .

On earth . . .

In the Eucharist . . .

But now, Lord Jesus, in my heart  
and deepest soul . . .

Amen . . .

## *The Second Prayer*

**O Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the Living God:**

With whose divinity my humanity will soon be united . . .

Whose divinity whole and entire is hidden for our strength and joy under the veils of the Eucharist . . .

**Who according to the will of the Father:**

In perfect obedience to His commands . . .

Which decreed our redemption . . .

And willed the Mass and Holy Communion as part of the means of our salvation . . .

**Through the cooperation of the Holy Ghost:**

Living in His Church . . .

And present in my soul . . .

The sanctifier, whom I humbly pray to make me holy enough to receive not unworthily the Word made flesh . . .

**Hast by thy death:**

On Calvary . . .

In the mystical sacrifice of the Mass . . .

**Given life to the world . . .**

By redemption . . .

As by creation . . .

Through the life of grace . . .

That flows through this sacrament of sacraments . . .

**Deliver us by this thy most sacred body and blood:**

Offered in the Mass and on Calvary . . .

Broken for me . . . and shed for my salvation . . .

Now present upon this altar...  
Soon to be present in my body and  
soul for my life and strength...

**From all my iniquities:**

That would keep me from worthily  
receiving you...

And might in death keep me from  
your company in heaven...

**And from every evil:**

To soul or body...

To myself or those for whom I  
pray...

To your Church, the saints, the  
sinners... all mankind...

**Make me always cleave to thy com-  
mandments:**

To love God...

To love our neighbor...

To follow the law of thy Beati-  
tudes...

To be part of Catholic Action...

**And never suffer me to be separated  
from thee:**

As could happen only through sin...

After this deep personal union in  
Holy Communion...

**Who with the same God, the Father  
and the Holy Ghost, livest and reignest God,  
world without end. Amen:**

True God in your divinity...

True man in your humanity...

Sharer of our nature who lifts our  
nature to divine heights...

Son of man who raises us to God...

With whom we shall be until the  
ending of eternity, which is forever...

Amen...



## *The Third Prayer*

**Let not the partaking of thy body:**

I make a final act of sorrow...

And a humble acknowledgement of  
my unworthiness...

And I pray for protection against  
anything that might displease thee...

Yet in all this my act of faith: This  
**IS** your body...

**O Lord Jesus Christ:**

My high priest and my Eucharistic  
victim...

My leader and King...

My teacher and governor...

My friend and advocate...

Soon to be my guest...

**Which I:**

Thy child...

Thy creature...

The guilty traitor...

Now thine expectant host...

**All unworthy:**

Because of sin and thoughtless-  
ness...

And the neglect of your inspiration  
and your grace...

And the betrayal of your cause...

And my great failing, which is  
(mention it)...

**Presume to receive:**

Knowing you want me to...

Hearing your gracious invitation,  
"Come to me"...

Hearing your lovely command, "Do  
this in memory of me"...

**Turn to my judgment and condemna-  
tion:**

Not condemnation and eternal  
death...

But life and light...

Your approving presence now...

Your friendly smile on judgment  
day...

**But through thy loving kindness:**

Never more heroically expressed  
than on Calvary...

Or more graciously than in Mass  
and Holy Communion...

**May it be to me a safeguard:**

Against the Devil, your enemy and  
mine...

Against evil and error and my own  
weakness...

**And remedy:**

Your divinity to remedy my weak  
humanity...

Your strength for my weakness...

Your purity for my sinfulness...

Your sinlessness in time of my  
temptation...

Always if I cooperate and use your  
gracious help...

**For soul and body:**

Which shall soon be united with your  
soul and body...

**Who with God the Father:**

My creator...

The reward of a good life...

**In the unity:**

Of the Trinity...

**Of the Holy Ghost:**

My sanctifier and comforter...

Living grace within my soul...

**Livest:**

As I hope to live...  
And as you have promised...

**And reignest:**

Over the world...  
Over your Church...  
Over the courts of heaven...  
Over my heart...

**God:**

And man...

**World without end. Amen:**

Joy of the saints...  
Judge of the living and of the  
dead...  
Guarantee that I too shall live  
forever...  
Amen...

## *The Banquet*

**H**OLY COMMUNION is the Eucharistic banquet. We enter the Church as the Apostles entered the chamber that was the upper room to celebrate the Christian Passover, the repetition of the Lord's beautiful Last Supper.

We come as the first Christians did to the agape, the love feast, where the Eucharist was the climax of their meal of love eaten together.

The Mass endlessly repeats that love feast which Christ ate with the Apostles and which the early Christians ate together.

The Passover of the Old Law melted into the sacrificial banquet of the New Law. No mortal lamb now, but the Lamb of God. The unleavened bread has found its true purpose: It has become the flesh of the Word Incarnate. The Jewish banquet wine now

becomes for all the world the chalice of salvation.

It was at a banquet, the wedding feast of Cana, that Christ prefigured the Last Supper in the changing of water into wine that was later to become His blood.

As host to the hungry multitudes upon the hillside He showed His power over the elements of wheat by multiplying the few loaves of bread to feed a populace. Now the bread made flesh is enough to feed a believing world.

Christ had insisted in the parable of the wedding feast that all who came to the feast of the King's Son wear the wedding garment of sanctifying grace. So as we approach the banquet table, we ask God to be sure that our souls are properly clad for the banquet that is about to begin.

Now at the Eucharistic banquet Christ is the host and I am the honored guest.

Yet soon in a heavenly transfer the host will come to me as my guest, and I shall play host or hostess to the guest of all guests.

At this banquet I shall be nourished with the food of angels and for my thirst will be given the wine that makes virgins.

All these thoughts run through my mind. On all these lovely truths I pause and pray as I kneel near the Communion rail, the invited guest who comes forward to the banquet of the Lord.

May we who banquet with Christ upon earth know the joy of the eternal banquet board of heaven.

### *Hospitality to Christ*

**W**HEN THE PEOPLE of His day heard Christ promise the Eucharist, many of them turned away and walked no more with Him.

They could not believe that God loved them to the extent of the Eucharist.

Selfish and cold themselves, they could not understand the wonders of the Sacred Heart.

"This saying is hard, and who can hear it?" was their hopeless protest. So Christ saw them leave Him because He loved them too much. They pulled back and fled from the frightening love that made the God-man give Himself totally to their love and service.

Today the overwhelming majority of the human race turn from Christ simply because their chilled hearts cannot accept so great a love as Christ's, so intense a personal service and sacrifice.

Christ continues to repeat, "This is my body. . . . This is my blood." And men answer: "Sorry . . . but I do not believe you."

Christ asks for the hospitality of their souls. And they say, "Sorry . . . but like the innkeepers of Bethlehem we have no room for you within."

Yet the world's rejection of Christ is far more than a repudiation of the Eucharist. Many who claim to accept Him include in their acceptance the life given directly in His Eucharistic promises.

But far, far more reject Him totally. He is not their God. They do not want Him as their Savior. He is the enemy of all they long for, the foe of their pride and lust. He bids them turn from their law of hate and take up His law of love . . . but they prefer their idols to His living beauty.

So it is that in large sectors of the earth Christ is the divine fugitive.

He is hated and hunted, rejected and persecuted, proscribed and refused admittance, driven forth into the night, branded a dangerous alien, barred from the places that

matter most to the modern man. He is cut away from their loves, shut out from their books, caricatured—if He appears at all—in their art, and hounded from their commerce and industry.

As I come toward my Lord in Holy Communion, it can be my keen delight that here I am doing for almost the only time something startlingly fine for Jesus Christ.

My very presence there is a great act of faith: "I believe that you are present in the Eucharist. I believe something so wonderful that only a God could have planned it and carried it through. I believe that you are God."

As I kneel at the altar rail, I am offering a welcome to the divine wanderer, the heavenly outcast.

Mine is a loyal welcome to the divine refugee, whose knock opens so few doors and who is barred from the palaces of the world. He who is driven away from the portals of government, commerce, the library and the auditorium, the theater and the stock market, the labor-union center and the hospital of the unbelieving world, Him I now bid enter the portals of my soul.

What is my Holy Communion?

A gesture of genuine hospitality to the rejected God of the universe.

The offer of shelter to the hated and hunted Christ.

The presentation of a refuge to the outcast from heaven on the earth He made, an earth on which He can find so few places whereon to lay His head.

The opening of my soul to house and shelter the world's Savior, whom the world will not accept...the world's Redeemer, whose presence the sinner cannot abide.

All this is implicit in my Holy Communion.

For all this I can happily prepare.

### *Those Who Did*

**A** LITTLE HOUSE not far from Jerusalem became for Christ a symbol of all hospitable Communion. We have already mentioned it, but it deserves more than passing comment.

The weary Jesus had found little enough welcome and understanding in the cities and countrysides that He roamed in His search of His beloved lambs. Plots festered in tapestried council rooms and down dark alleys. Sin held its senates of conspiracy, bent upon snuffing out the Light of the World. The mob passed over His words of love, waiting for Him to blast with hate their Roman conquerors. They heard Him speak of the bread of life... and they wondered when He would next multiply bread and fishes. They accepted His miracles grudgingly . . . and promptly forgot the miracleworker.

Even His disciples, eager enough and willing but blind, misunderstanding, quarreling behind His back, boasting of the slight wonders they did through His power, and resentful that He did not bomb with fire ungracious cities, traveled with Him in a fog of confusion. They snapped at His beloved poor and spoke roughly to the sinful woman who touched Him hopefully. They continued to walk with Him because often enough they were lured by the hope of thrones all velvet and gold.

Life was lonely enough for the world's Savior—when it was not actually rough with hate or periled with conspiracy.

Bent with the burdens of mankind, weary with hunger for men's love, the object of misunderstanding, rejection, apathy, and hate, Jesus turned away from His customary roads and took the straight, dusty road that led to Bethany, to friends who would, He knew, welcome Him eagerly.

And He found them as He had hoped.

Lazarus flung open the door of his comfortable house and welcomed the master with the overflowing of his generous heart.

Mary sat at His feet and poured her love over Him, listening to His beautiful plans, giving Him that absorbing silence that was incense and perfume, reassurance and fresh human courage.

Martha, pattern of all who welcome Christ in eager service, was busy making the house more comfortable and bright for Him.

That is the way it can be with us in Holy Communion.

We can open our souls to welcome Jesus as He pauses hopefully before us and asks, "May I enter?"

We can lovingly sit at the feet of our divine guest, adoring Him, listening to His plans for us and for all human happiness, sharing His dreams, promising to help Him to new triumphs.

We can set our house in order and make Him feel completely at home therein.

There is in Martha a suggestion for our conduct: She should have prepared before His coming so that she would, when He came, devote herself completely to His words and His love. Our preparation before Holy Communion should be so complete that when He comes, all is in readiness and we can relax, give ourselves over to conversation with Him, and enjoy the undivided devotion



that is the highest sign of friendliness, hospitality, and love.

### *Suggested Preparations*

**H**ERE ARE SOME SIMPLE THOUGHTS that may occupy our minds as we prepare for the coming of the Savior, thoughts that will make our Communion more personal, our thanksgiving more effective.

We play innkeeper and welcome Mary, who comes bringing the Infant Savior.

We are Egyptians who offer shelter to the pursued and hunted Infant Christ.

As the holy family return from Egypt, we offer them the hospitality of our souls so that the young Christ need not spend the night under the cold skies.

We meet the homeless Christ during His public life and take Him into our homes.

When He is hunted by enemies who are ours as well as His, Jesus asks shelter and protection with us, and we gladly take Him in.

The risen Christ, after He has left His disciples, comes to spend time with me.

I offer my Mass for the souls in purgatory, and during my Holy Communion I mention to Christ the souls there for whom I have planned to pray.

I offer my Mass in sorrow for sins, and in my Holy Communion I discuss with Christ the problems that lead to sin and how best these problems can be handled.

I offer my Mass for the conversion of the world, planning to ask for the conversion of certain definite souls . . . in certain countries . . . of certain peoples . . . during Holy Communion.

I offer my Mass in thanksgiving for God's benefits, thinking about them carefully, so that when I have received the Eucharistic gift, I may discuss these gifts gratefully with Him.

I make a great act of faith that climaxes in my faith in the Blessed Sacrament.

Recalling God's goodness, I make an act of hope, now especially to get strength and grace for the whole of life from my Holy Communion.

The Mass is the sacrifice of love; Holy Communion is the banquet of love. I make an act of love that continues into my Communion.

I associate myself with the Apostles as they sit down with Christ for the Last Supper.

I associate myself with the early Christians at their love feast that was the agape.

I associate myself with the Christians in the Roman catacombs as they welcome the banned and outlawed Christ.

I watch the Blessed Virgin receive Holy Communion at the hands of St. John, and I try to imitate her devotion.

I imagine how my favorite saint would have received Holy Communion, and I associate myself with him or her.

I pretend that this is my viaticum, and I prepare myself for this Communion as I would were it to be my last.

I think back to my first Holy Communion, and I make up now for youthful thoughtlessness while I ask God for youthful innocence.

# Two Pamphlets for Frequent Use

## How to Pray the Mass

"The Mass is our sacrifice. . . . Realizing this, the Catholic wants to fulfill his royal priesthood to the best of his ability. He wants to be present at Mass, not as a passive spectator, but as an active participant."

The pamphlet "How to Pray the Mass" gives six methods of assisting at holy Mass. Their variety and beauty will help to keep devotion fresh and glowing.

## Thanksgiving After Holy Communion

"The most precious moments of a lifetime are those immediately after Holy Communion. For a brief quarter of an hour our hearts are sectors of heaven. Jesus Christ, Son of God and Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, Savior, Master, King of Kings, is there."

In "Thanksgiving after Holy Communion" Father Lord suggests eleven ways to make the most of those precious minutes in intimate union with Christ.

Each pamphlet: 10c  
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**THE QUEEN'S WORK**

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