

Miller, Ernest F.
The why and how
of Holy...
ADU 3734

THE WHY AND HOW OF HOLY COMMUNION

E. F. Miller, C.S.S.R.



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2016

885157

THE WHY AND HOW OF HOLY COMMUNION

by

Ernest F. Miller, C.S.S.R.



COPYRIGHT 1959

LIGUORIAN PAMPHLETS
REDEMPTORIST FATHERS

Liguori, Missouri

Imprimi Potest:

JOHN N. McCORMICK, C.S.S.R.

Provincial St. Louis Province

Redemptorist Fathers

June 22, 1959



Imprimatur:

✠ JOSEPH E. RITTER

Archbishop of St. Louis

St. Louis, June 30, 1959

CONTENTS

The Why and How of Holy Communion.....	5
The Definition of the Blessed Sacrament.....	7
The Proof of the Possibility of the Eucharist.....	9
The Promise.....	13
The Institution.....	16
The Tradition of the Church.....	17
The Eucharist — the Doctrine of Love.....	19
God's Way of Entering the Blessed Sacrament.....	21
The Sick Woman.....	24
No Mortal Sin.....	29
Necessity of Confession.....	31
Venial Sins.....	32
Fasting.....	34
Faith.....	40
Miracles.....	41
Emotionalism.....	45
The Immediate Preparation.....	47
External Deportment.....	49
Distractions.....	54
Frequency of Holy Communion.....	55
The Effects of Holy Communion.....	61
Spiritual Communion.....	62

THE WHY AND HOW OF HOLY COMMUNION

ERNEST F. MILLER, C.S.S.R.

This booklet is about the Blessed Sacrament, with particular emphasis on Holy Communion. It is about the love of Our Lord for the people of the world, as that love is proved in the gift of the Blessed Sacrament to the people of the world. It is about all the things that the people of the world can and should do to show their appreciation to Our Lord for the gift of Himself in the Blessed Sacrament and about the rules that they should observe in the reception of Holy Communion.

The Blessed Sacrament is the proof of God's love for man.

A great deal is written in these times, probably a half million words a day, on the subject of love. There are the love-lorn columnists of the daily papers who attempt to settle the problems that arise from a human love (between husband and wife, boy-friend and girl-friend, fiance and fiancée) that is too violent or too weak.

There are the novelists, the scenarists for the movies and the script authors for the radio and the television who can seldom conceive a plot unless it center about the love of a man for a woman and a woman for a man.

There are the teen-agers who practice (or try to practice) the art of love almost before they are housebroken and have learned the secret of taking their food with a spoon and a knife and fork instead of with their fingers.

It is strange that in all the words that are written and spoken about love in the papers and the pictures, seldom (in comparison) are there tales told about the love that exists between a mother and her son, between children and their parents, between a friend and a friend. Yet, this kind of love is just as true and valid as that which exists between a boy and a girl, between a man and a woman, between a husband and a wife. Undoubtedly the reason for this silence is the conviction of many moderns that love and sex go together, that you cannot have the one without the other. And since there is no sex connected with parental love at all it therefore has no right to space in papers and the expenditure of words from the pens of authors.

It is not the purpose of this booklet to discuss and expose the falsity of this position. Suffice it to say that the position is false. May God enlighten and redirect the thinking of those who are so naively and completely taken in.

It is stranger still that the secular papers and other media of communication — television, radio, magazines etc. — are so little concerned with the love that God has for man. Have you, reading these lines, ever seen one column from a love-lorn columnist in a newspaper on the love of Jesus Christ for the poor, sinful creatures of the world? One short story in the Saturday Evening Post or Life or Look or in any one of the innumerable movie magazines from Hollywood giving a proof of the love that God has for man? There are many columns and many stories about the boy-girl relationship, about the husband-wife relationship, about the triangle, about the love-

nest and the love-murder. But not one, or rather hardly one word about the Creator-creature relationship.

To make reparation for so sad a silence the following words are written. They are about the love that Our Lord has for His people on the earth. They are about the proof of that love as that proof is firmly established in the Holy Eucharist or the Blessed Sacrament of the altar.

THE DEFINITION OF THE BLESSED SACRAMENT

The Blessed Sacrament of the Catholic Church is the presence of Jesus Christ in the substance of His Body and His Blood under the appearance of bread and wine. The Blessed Sacrament is not merely a memory of Our Lord, or a memorial of the time He broke and ate bread with His apostles at the Last Supper the night before He died. It is actually Himself, dwelling on the altar in order to be close to the ones whom He loves so much.

Because Catholics believe that Jesus Christ is substantially present in the tabernacles of their churches, they genuflect on one knee in adoration each time they pass before the tabernacle (when they are inside the church), each time they come into the church and before they enter the pew that they will occupy for the duration of the service or of their prayers, and each time they depart from the church after the service or their prayers are finished. On leaving their pew they do not make a turn towards the rear of the church without first making their

act of adoration of Jesus Christ by again genuflecting on one knee.

When Catholic men pass before the tabernacle of a Catholic church in a car or a bus or while on foot, they tip their hat. Women and girls bless themselves in Catholic communities or, in non-Catholic communities, merely bow the head and say to themselves an aspiration like, "Jesus I love You and adore You."

But is there anything to this Catholic doctrine of the real presence of Jesus Christ under the appearance of bread and wine? Quite definitely there is.

The fact that a man cannot see Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament with his bodily eyes is no proof that Our Lord is not there. One does not see the wind that sweeps through the sky. Yet, one knows that it exists. One does not see the pipes and wires that lie hidden beneath the streets of the big city. But both the wind in the sky and the tangle of wires and cables and pipes beneath the city can be found out to exist by means of a bit of sincere investigation. So also can the presence of Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament be found out to exist by means of a bit of sincere investigation.

It was Jesus Christ Himself who laid the groundwork for the Blessed Sacrament and then, when the people had time to gain their footing on so fantastic and unheard-of a foundation, actually gave the doctrine to the world. In other words Jesus Christ showed the people the *possibility* of the Blessed Sacrament first, then *promised* it and finally *instituted* it shortly before He died on the cross.

The laying of the foundation and the giving of the promise came some months before the passion and the death of Our Lord.

The Proof of the Possibility of the Eucharist

Our Lord had so amazed and entranced the people by the magic of His words and the beauty of His doctrine that they gathered by the thousands to hear Him speak when the word got around that He was in the neighborhood. In fact, they would not let Him alone even for a moment. They had to follow Him wherever He went. When He stole away in the dead of night to obtain for Himself a few days of spiritual and physical rest, they found out where He went and without a thought about food or drink chased after Him until they found Him.

On one occasion He was in a quiet corner of the desert where He surely thought that He was secure from the intrusion of outsiders at least for a short time when suddenly He spied on the horizon an incredibly large crowd approaching Him. It turned out that the crowd of people reached the tremendous number of ten thousand. They were pushing forward pell-mell to ferret out the Master and to learn wisdom from His lips.

Well, the upshot of the whole thing was that Our Lord had to feed them. And since He could not feed them in the normal way due to the fact that there were no stores handy with sufficient supplies on the shelves to provide for the needs of so vast a multitude, He had to feed them miraculously. They were so hungry that some of them were fainting. They were so tired that most of them were ready to lie down where they were and give themselves over to sleep. And they had only a few loaves of bread and a small basket of fish amongst the whole ten thousand.

This is what Our Lord did.

He took the few loaves of bread and the basket of fish and He multiplied them into hundreds of loaves of bread and baskets of fish. He told His apostles to distribute the food amongst the people. And wonders of wonders, there was plenty of food to go around. Indeed, there was much left over that could not be eaten. The people couldn't help but notice what had happened. It convinced them all the more that this man was not one of the ordinary run. He had something. He was something. As yet they did not know what it was.

Jesus had more of a reason for working this miracle than the providing for the physical hunger of the multitude. He wanted to prove to the people that there was no impossibility or contradiction in God's taking one loaf of bread and making it stretch so far that it could feed a hundred and a thousand people. Neither then could there be an impossibility or contradiction in His placing His Sacred Body in the tabernacle of a church and allowing it to be consumed by a hundred people, a thousand people, without diminishing or disappearing.

The miracle of the multiplication of the loaves and fishes was the proof of the possibility of the Blessed Sacrament as the Holy Communion. And when men later on would scoff at the idea of the one and same Lord being given out whole and entire to five hundred people at the Communion railing as though such a thing were out of the question, all one would have to do in refutation would be to refer to the historical fact of the multiplication of the loaves and the fishes.

Not long after this miracle of the multiplication of the loaves and fishes, the apostles got into a small boat to go over to the other side of the lake and make preparations for Our Lord's evangelization of that area later on. Meanwhile, He would stay behind and take the rest that He needed and

in which He had been interrupted by His "fans" and followers. In due time He would catch up with them and the work of the apostolate would again go on.

Hardly had the apostles pushed out into the deep of the lake when a powerful storm blew up. Lightning flashed, thunder rolled and the waves grew so great that they threatened to swamp the boat and to swallow up its occupants. Naturally the apostles hardly viewed the danger with equanimity. They were frightened to death. There would be no chance for them if they were tossed into the sea in so furious a turmoil of water; and already the boat was half filled with water. In another moment it would be gone and its human cargo with it.

There was only one thing to do — cry out to the Master to save them. The voices arose above the winds and the waves and the rumbling, ominous thunder. "Master, save us! We are drowning!" No answer. Once more they called out to the absent Christ to come to their rescue, this time their words silenced by the rushing and the howling of the winds. But their words were heard by Our Lord.

A brilliant circle of light appeared on the water hardly a stone's throw from the boat. The apostles did not have to look twice to know what it was. The brilliant circle of light enclosed the body of the Saviour. He was walking towards them *on the water*, as though there were no weight or substance to His body, and everywhere His feet touched the water, the waves became calm and the calmness spread out and went forth like the rings caused on a lake by the dropping of a pebble until there was no storm left at all and the sea was as quiet as a pavement or a puddle in a sheltered corner.

This miracle was worked to save the apostles. But in conjunction with that purpose was a higher and more far-reaching purpose. It was this.

When the Blessed Sacrament was instituted later on, people would undoubtedly say that such a doctrine was impossible on the score that the body of a grown man weighed a hundred and sixty or a hundred and seventy pounds. How could so heavy a body be consumed like bread or locked up in a tabernacle that was too small for the containing of even the smallest baby?

The answer lay in the miracle of the walking on the water. If Our Lord's body could be made so light as to be able to traverse the waves without sinking and without the need of the powerful strokes of the swimmer, it could also be made sufficiently weightless to be held within the confines of the golden ciborium or within the mouth of the child just come to the use of reason; it could be made sufficiently light to be held aloft in the hands of the weakest priest — and all the while remain the true body of Jesus Christ. The body that walked on the water was the true body of Jesus Christ. So also would be the body of Jesus Christ in the Blessed Sacrament of the altar.

This miracle, as well as the miracle of the multiplication of the loaves and fishes, was witnessed by more than one person — by more than one *stable* and *well-balanced* person. Hardly could its reality be denied on the diagnosis of hysteria. Seldom do a dozen or a hundred or a thousand people become hysterical all at the same time.

These miracles really happened. They were the preparation that Our Lord made for the eventual institution of the Blessed Sacrament. They were worked to show how reasonable the doctrine of the Blessed Sacrament could be. The definite promise of the Eucharist could now be given without fear of a clamor coming from the minds and lips of men because of the uniqueness of the institution and the miraculous power that its continued existence would demand.

The Promise

Once more the Jews were gathered together. Once more Our Lord was with them. The meeting was taking place on the other side of the lake. The apostles had finally finished their journey and succeeded in getting things ready for the arrival of Our Lord. He was now with them. It had not taken long for a crowd to come together. Many of the people were the ones who had profited by the multiplication of the loaves and fishes. A great buzzing was going on amongst them, everybody talking about the strange thing that had happened on the other side of the lake when they were so hungry and when there was nothing available to eat, and how all of a sudden bread seemed to drop down upon them as though it came from heaven.

It was all beyond comprehension. Who was this man who had the power to do such fantastic things? And so the talk went on, one and all comparing the miracle of the loaves and fishes to the miracle of the manna that had come down from heaven when the Jews were starving in the desert years before as they were attempting to make their way from the captivity of Egypt to the safety and happiness of the promised land of Palestine.

Our Lord listened and said little.

Finally the moment came — the moment for the giving of the promise of the Blessed Sacrament of the altar and the Holy Communion for the hearts and the souls of men. The stage was set. The preliminaries were over. Our Lord held up His hand for silence. Gradually the buzzing ceased. All eyes were turned on Him. What would He do now? What

startling miracle would He work now? The air was tense with excitement and anticipation.

First of all He chided them a little bit for placing so much emphasis on the merely "human" bread that Moses had gotten for them in the desert, bread that was merely human in this that it was given solely for the purpose of satisfying hunger. "Labor not for the bread that perishes," our Lord said. "Labor rather for that which endureth unto life everlasting which the Son of Man will give you. Moses gave you not bread from heaven. But My Father giveth you the true bread from heaven."

He paused for a moment that His words might sink in and be understood. Then, without further introduction, He spoke of what He intended to do. "I am the bread of life. I am the living bread come down from heaven. If any man eateth of this bread, he shall live forever; and the bread that I will give is the flesh for the life of the world.

The Jews looked at one another, wondering what was coming next. These were indeed strange words. Our Lord went on. "Except you eat of the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you shall not have life in you. He that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood hath everlasting life and I will raise him up on the last day. For My flesh is meat indeed and My blood is drink indeed. He that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood abideth in Me and I in him."

These words are reported in the sixth chapter of the gospel of St. John.

Of course some of the people immediately began to cry out against the words of Our Lord in spite of the miracles He had so recently worked and which they had seen with their own eyes. It was not a case of their not understanding what

He meant. They knew what He meant well enough. It was a case of their being unwilling to accept the other miracles because they saw them with their eyes. This miracle they did not want to accept because they could not see it with their eyes.

In effect they said, "What does He think we are? Cannibals? Eaters of human flesh?" Without further investigation they turned their backs on Our Lord and in spite of the wonders of which they had been the witnesses refused to talk with Him any longer. This was a dodge on their part to escape having to accept that which was spiritual in meaning and content. As long as a miracle helped them materially, fine. As soon as a miracle made spiritual demands on them, they were ready to deny it. They were worldlings, people of hard hearts and soiled souls.

Our Lord did not call them back and tell them that they were mistaken, that He did not mean the words in the sense in which they took them, that He was talking figuratively rather than literally. He let them go. In fact He emphasized the literal meaning of the words by asking the apostles, "Will you also leave Me because of what I have said?"

If only the Jews had waited a little while longer before taking their departure, they would have found out what was meant by "eating My Body and drinking My Blood." That was their trouble, just as it is the trouble of many people of the twentieth century. They couldn't wait. They wanted the explanation right away, and it had to be a "sensible" explanation, an explanation that they could get ahold of with their senses. Their first reaction was to paint a picture of people actually cutting up Our Lord's body as it stood before them and eating it. Our Lord did not mean that at all.

•

The Institution

The actual fulfillment of the promise of the Blessed Sacrament came the night before Christ died. It took place at the Last Supper.

The story is too well known for elaborate retelling. Simply it is this. Jesus and His closest friends, the apostles, were having their last meal together before the passion and the crucifixion of the morrow. It was a meal during which Our Lord expressed His love for the people of the world a dozen times. He even went to the extent of washing the feet of the apostles as a testimonial of His love. But He reserved for the very end of the meal the action that would be an everlasting proof of His undying affection — the leaving of Himself even after His death in the Blessed Sacrament of the altar.

He took bread in His hands, blessed and broke and gave it to his friends, saying, "Take and eat. *This is My Body.*" He did the same in regard to a chalice of wine. "Take and drink. *This is My Blood.*" And then, "Do this in memory of Me."

So that was it. That was what He meant when He talked about eating His body and drinking His blood. By His divine power He would change the substance of bread into the substance of His body and blood, allowing the *accidents* of bread, such as weight, color, taste, size and so forth to remain, and the *accidents* of His body, such as weight, color and so forth to be concealed. This would be a change only of substances, that is, of the essentials that make bread what it is and the body of Christ what it is. Surely this change was possible through the power of God.

Thus, from the standpoint of the Bible the doctrine of the Blessed Sacrament is amply proved. And from the standpoint of reason no contradiction is posed. But there is still another proof, that of tradition.

The Tradition of the Church

There have been people in recent centuries who denied that Jesus Christ had any intention of changing bread and wine into His body and blood when He gave the promise to the Jews after the multiplication of the loaves and fishes and the walking on the water and then later on when He said the words, "This is My Body. This is My Blood. Do this in memory of Me." They maintained that Our Lord meant all kinds of things by the promise and by the words of institution at the Last Supper. In fact, everyone of them had a different explanation and drew a different meaning out of the two episodes. But not a single one of them agreed with the Catholic and traditional interpretation.

Their position is not very strong.

The people of the *earliest* Church held firmly to the belief that the Blessed Sacrament was the actual substance of the body and blood of Jesus Christ. Their writings are still with us. They can be found in most public libraries of any size. What the writings say about the Blessed Sacrament in the first days of the Church is clear beyond doubt.

Take for example the testimony of St. Ignatius the martyr. He wrote in the first century of Christianity, "Some people

withdraw themselves from the Eucharist because they do not admit that it is the flesh of Our Redeemer, Jesus Christ, the same which suffered for our sins. Those who deny this gift die in their opposition and descend without hope into perdition."

St. Ignatius knew Ss. Peter and John personally. He was their disciple. He had seen Our Lord after the resurrection and probably had heard Him speak. He was acquainted with St. Paul. If anybody knew what the apostles taught about the "body and blood of Jesus Christ," surely he did. In his writings he merely wrote down what he had received from the apostles. And the apostles got their doctrine from Christ.

The words of St. Ignatius prove that Our Lord's doctrine on the Holy Eucharist is to be taken literally. Christ meant what He said. He was not talking in figures of speech or with a poetic license. And the whole early Church believed the teaching with him and acted accordingly.

A hundred different names could be drawn up and their writings listed of the Christians, many of them learned and holy men, who lived in the first, second and third centuries and—who put down on paper their belief in the real presence of the body and blood of Jesus Christ in the sacrament of the altar. This list can be found in any approved Catholic theology or history of the Church.

In fact the doctrine was not denied on a large scale until the sixteenth century when the Protestant "reformation" swept over the western world. Until then, the "real presence" was taken for granted by all those who called themselves Christian.

Is it possible that the early Christians who lived so close to the time of the apostles, heard them speak, teach the catechism and tell of their experiences with Christ should *not* know what Christ meant by the words "This is My Body — This is My Blood — Do this in memory of Me." and that the "reformers" who lived in the sixteenth century *should* know fifteen hundred years after the last apostle died?

It is incredible, especially in view of the fact that amongst the "reformers" no two leaders or the followers of the leaders could ever quite agree on what the body of Christ in Holy Communion really was. Before they finished interpreting the texts concerned with the Blessed Sacrament, they had arrived at more than three hundred different meanings for the simple biblical words.

So, there can be little doubt in the mind of the thinking man as to the meaning of and the proof for the doctrine of the Holy Eucharist.

The Eucharist - the Doctrine of Love

There can be little doubt either but that the Eucharist or the Blessed Sacrament is the doctrine of love. It is the proof of a love so great that never in the history of the world has there been anything in the form of love to approximate it.

Our Lord is present in the Holy Eucharist under the form of bread. That which appears to be bread is actually Jesus Christ. This bread not only can be eaten but Jesus Christ desires that it be eaten. Like food it is assimilated into the

body of the one who eats it. God's body is incorporated into the blood and the bone and the very substance of a man's body, bringing about as close a union between two people as is possible upon the earth. This is exactly what Our Lord wants. "Unless you eat My Body and drink My Blood you cannot have life in you."

Union is always a sign of love, of divine love as well as human love. Lovers will leave mother and father and all things to be with the one whom they love. Examples of this are to be found in the lives of young men who are called to the service of their country.

Very often these young men enter marriage just before they leave home for camp where they are scheduled to take their basic training. The girls they marry may be from fine families in the big cities. They have a sufficiency of money to buy beautiful clothes and a sufficiency of opportunity to show them off before an audience. They are protected from the heat of summer and the cold of winter. They have everything they want.

Yet, they are willing to give up all these comforts and conveniences in order to follow their new husband to a camp that may be set up in the center of a woods, where there are no decent homes to be lived in, no conveniences, no comforts. They will suffer heat and cold and loneliness in order to be with or at least near to the one they love. The deep love that husband and wife have for each other demands that they be united as closely as they possibly can.

Love feeds on union. And all the tears that are shed and all the grief that is felt when a separation of loved ones is necessary is nothing more than a bolstering up of the fact that love and union go together. When two people do not desire to be together, when they take no steps to be together, they can hardly be said to be in love.

Surely, then, God shows His love for the people of the world when He devises a medium for a union between Himself and the people of the world that is so close that there is no other union like it. God could have thought up other ways of helping people if that had been the only idea He had in His mind. He could have even sent His angels to dispense the help that was needed. But no. He decided that He would enter the very hearts of people; that *His* own most precious blood would flow through their veins; that His sacred body would become one with their body so that they and He would form but one principle of operation.

Truly this, as a testimonial and a proof of love, cannot be challenged. Truly it is incredible. Truly could St. Alphonsus Liguori cry out, "The pagans imagined their gods according to their own caprices, creating gods of war and peace and love and hatred, of great mercy and unbelievable generosity. But no pagan in the wildest flight of fancy ever conceived a god with a love as great for creatures as the true God has for the children of men, indeed with a love so great that it moved this true God to give Himself to the children of men actually as their food and drink."

God's Way of Entering the Blessed Sacrament

But how and when does God take over the bread and wine with His own substance and dwell there as He dwelt with His mother and St. Joseph in the little home in Nazareth? It does not happen automatically or accidentally or merely because people believe with their faith that He is present in the bread.

Jesus Christ takes up His residence in the holy Host as the result of the power that is exercised by the priest in the sacrifice of the Mass. Only then. At no other time. And in no other way. Our Lord made this arrangement when He was here on earth, as the story of the Last Supper proved.

It is only necessary to repeat in a word what was said in a number of words before. Our Lord took the bread and wine and He changed them into His body and blood with the statements and the command, "This is My Body — This is My Blood." Then He said, "*Do this in memory of Me.*" Do what? Do what He did. Say the words and change the bread and wine into His own most precious body and blood. The apostles understood in these words of Our Lord the giving to them of a power greater than that of kings and dictators, a power over the heavens and in a sense even over the Lord of the heavens.

Henceforth God would obey the apostles and the successors of the apostles, the priests of God's Church. No matter how weak or sinful or ignorant, when they said Mass and pronounced the words of consecration "This is My Body — This is My Blood," the Master of creation would leave whatever He was doing in heaven, pass through the stars and the clouds and stand before the priest in the substance of His body and His blood for further orders. Amazing!

It must be kept in mind that only one possessing the power can change the bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ. It is not a case of anybody coming along and just "believing" that Christ is present in or under the appearance of bread and wine, and lo, He is there.

To be able to bring God down from heaven by the pronouncing of certain words demands power, sheer, unearthly power. That power belongs only to the priest, that is, to a

man who has been given the power by God to do so astounding a deed. He received the power in promise on the day on which the apostles received it from Christ and which they handed down throughout the centuries in an unbroken line until the day that he received it in actuality when he was ordained.

Perhaps some people hate priests, even good and saintly priests, because of this power that all priests possess. Perhaps it is because the priest has so much power. It may be a case of jealousy. Generally it is people who are tyrants and have stolen a power that does not belong to them who hate the priests the most — people like Hitler and Stalin and Tito. They don't want anybody to have more power than they have. And so they do everything they can to wipe out the priests once and for all. Then there will be nobody to compete with them for "top gun" as they say in the West-erns, by which is meant, for the highest and most powerful position.

As a part of the Mass, that is, as a part of this tremendous exercise of power whereby God is brought down on earth, the priest consumes one of the consecrated Hosts. But many other consecrated Hosts he places in the tabernacle in a golden vessel called a ciborium. The Blessed Sacrament remains in these consecrated Hosts as long as the accidents of bread remain intact. When the accidents of size, appearance, color etc. disappear through dissolution or destruction, then our Lord takes His departure too. Thus, the consecrated Hosts could remain in the tabernacle for months without dissolution or destruction happening. All that time Our Lord is really present.

The reason Our Lord is placed in the golden ciborium in the tabernacle on the altar is first of all to give Him a place to stay while He is here on earth in His body and His blood.

He was not accepted by the people of Bethlehem when the time came for His birth. There was no room for Him in the inn. Since that time the Church has always been careful to provide a little house for Him in everyone of her temples throughout the world.

Besides, the lovers of Our Lord are given a chance to visit Him as long as He is in the tabernacle, to talk to Him as friend to friend, to ask Him for the favors that they need and to receive from His bodily presence the strength to carry on in His service and to die in His love. Visits to the Blessed Sacrament are very profitable for the salvation of the soul.

But the main reason for Our Lord's being placed in the tabernacle is to give the people the chance to receive Him as often as they can in Holy Communion. This is called "going to Communion." This is just about the greatest experience that a man can have on earth — to kneel at the railing and to let the great God of the heavens come down and move into his heart almost as though he were on the same level with God. There is nothing like it.

The Sick Woman

The story is told in the Bible of a poor woman who was grievously ill. She was so ill that the doctors had given her up completely, telling her that there was no hope and that the only thing she could do was to resign herself to the death that soon would come upon her. They had tried everything. Nothing succeeded. There was nothing more that they could do. They packed up their instruments and medical materials and went away, leaving her alone with the condemnation of death hanging over her.

It is easily imaginable how sad the woman was on receiving this doleful news. She did not want to die. She had much to live for. She was in the prime of life. Yet, what could she do? The doctors had no remedy to halt the ravages of the germs that were attacking her. Surely she could not cure herself.

While she was bemoaning her fate and wondering what to do next, she heard a loud commotion taking place in the street outside her house. Looking through the window, she saw Jesus of Nazareth coming down the street, surrounded by a great crowd of people who were jabbering and pushing and pulling and carrying on as though they owned not only the street but the Lord Himself. They had kicked up a huge cloud of dust and this huge cloud of dust so completely enveloped them that they could hardly be seen except in snatches. They seemed to be floating down the street in a kind of cloud or fog. The din that they were causing, however, made it quite certain that they were actually there and not a chimera or a figment of the imagination.

The sick woman watched with interest. And then as though by a blinding flash of inspiration the thought came to her that perhaps here was her solution and her cure. The doctors could not help her. But the doctors did not have all the answers. There was one greater than the doctors. This one out in the street. She had heard of the wonders that He performed, how He gave back sight to the blind and speech and hearing to the dumb and the deaf. It was reported that He had even raised the dead to life. Why could He not help her? She must get out there and ask Him before He got away. This would probably be her last chance of seeing Him so close at hand.

How she got out to the street in her weakened condition she could never adequately explain afterwards to her family and friends when she related the experience of that day. But

she did get out to the street. She found herself in a most advantageous position. Our Lord would practically have to step on her to get by. She waited, the words on her lips that she would say, "Master, Lord, help me. I am sick unto death. You are my only chance of recovery. Cure me. Please." It would take only a moment to say the words. But a moment would be enough.

And then a strange thing happened. Jesus was right next to her. Slowly He was moving by without His eyes having fallen on her even for a moment. In another minute He would be gone. If she did not cry out now, it would be too late. But she could not cry out. Her tongue seemed to be tied within her mouth and her lips sealed so that she could not open them. She was too lowly and unimportant — that was the thought that was sweeping through her mind. He was too great and mighty. He might hurl a curse upon her or at least tell her to mind her own business if she dared ask Him to cure her by a miracle. What should, what could she do? The dust was blinding her eyes and choking her throat and the crowd was nearly trampling her into the ground.

Well, there was one thing that she could do — she could touch the edge of the great Man's garment as He swept by. There was no reason to suppose that the power He possessed could not pass through His garment into her disease-ridden body and destroy the forces that were consuming it. Really, it was not necessary for her to speak at all. He undoubtedly knew all things. If He wanted to cure her, he would feel the touch of her fingers even though they did no more than brush against the cloak that He was wearing.

Haltingly she put out her hand and gently placed it at the very bottom of Our Lord's cloak just as He was about to pass beyond her reach. And strange! He felt the touch. Immediately He stopped and looked down. There was the poor

woman, half sitting, half kneeling in the dust of the street, now all blushes and embarrassment. What had she done! What horrible presumption had she been guilty of! Where could she hide? A deep silence came over the crowd.

Our Lord asked her for her story. What was the trouble? What was she doing, crouching down there in the street? Why didn't she get up and ask her question if she had a question to ask? Let her speak up and He would see what He could do.

In a rush of words the story came out. No longer was her tongue tied now. She told Him how she had been given up by the doctors, how she saw Him coming down the street and how a new hope had been born in her heart. She told Him how she had felt unworthy to cry out for a favor when there were so many more important people around Him than herself who were looking for favors too and who deserved His attention more than she. After all, He was so mighty and holy, and she was so small and unimportant and sinful. So, she decided that there was only one thing she dared do, and that one thing was merely to touch His garment and let Him do the rest.

Our Lord was impressed by the faith and the humility and the confidence of the woman. And He rewarded her. He commanded her to stand up and not to give one single thought to her sickness ever again. The woman stood up. Literally she felt the sickness drain from her body. Our Lord touched her forehead with His finger and moved on and was immediately swallowed up by the dust and by the crowd. And almost as though she had just been through a dream the woman found herself alone in the street before her house.

But she was cured. The Lord had said so. Slowly she started for her house. What had happened to her seemed unbelievable. She felt her arms and legs and head to make

sure that she was awake. Yes, she was awake. And she was cured! There wasn't an ache or a pain in her whole body. Not only that. She felt as fresh and as young as though she had been shorn of twenty years. Oh, the wonder of it! Oh, the goodness of the Wonder-Worker of Nazareth!

All this happened, according to the story in the Bible, to one who did no more than touch Our Lord's coat. And a miracle resulted.

When the Christian goes to Holy Communion, there is a great deal more accomplished than the mere touch of Our Lord's coat with a finger of the hand. The Master does not walk up and down the Communion railing shaking hands with people or letting them reach out and touch His arm or His face as He passes by. He actually goes into the body and the blood of the ones who receive Him. That is what He wants. That is what He commands.

Yes, He even commands it. And so serious and earnest is He in the command that He places a sanction on obedience to the command.

He says, "Unless you eat My Body and drink My Blood, *you shall not have life in you.*" It is like a millionaire who says to a poor man whom he meets in the street and who never did a single favor for him before, "I want to give you a million dollars. And so urgently do I want you to take the million dollars that I will see to it that you go to jail if you refuse to take it." Would anybody have to be threatened with a jail sentence in order to be made to take a million dollars?

Should anybody have to be threatened with the prison of hell in order to be made to take the body and blood of Jesus Christ into his heart? What comparison is there between a million dollars and the Blessed Saviour who not only made

man but also loves man so much that He died for him and then came back to live with him and be his spiritual food and drink in the Blessed Sacrament of the altar?

Yes, Our Lord placed sanctions on obedience to His command to receive Holy Communion. But the promises He gave of help and strength and ceaseless protection to those who receive Him regularly outweigh by far the sanctions. It is the promises rather than the sanctions that should be considered. None need fear the sanctions who does those things that will bring to him the fulfillment of the promises.

The promises of Our Lord will be fulfilled on the condition that Holy Communion be received *worthily*. Therefore, it is necessary to outline briefly the things that are necessary for a worthy reception of the Sacrament of the altar so that the recipient can be certain that he will obtain from the Sacrament all the graces that God wants to give to him.

No Mortal Sin

First of all, when one goes to Communion, one must be quite free from serious, unforgiven mortal sin. The reason for this rule is obvious.

What is a mortal sin but a sign of hatred for God. It is a repetition of the treachery of the apostle Judas. Judas pointed out Jesus to the Roman soldiers who came to arrest Him but who were not sufficiently acquainted with Him to know who He was. The traitor accomplished his treachery by implanting a kiss on the Lord's cheek and saying, "Hail, Rabbi." That was the signal.

The soldiers went right to their mark. They seized Our Lord and started Him on the road of His passion that was to end only on the hill of Calvary. The deed of Judas was one of immense and unbelievable cruelty and ingratitude. He posed as Jesus' friend only that he might bring about His downfall and death. And that, for a handful of coins!

St. Paul says in one of his letters to the Christians of his day that the person who commits a deliberate mortal sin does exactly the same thing. He poses as the friend of Our Lord by going to church and wearing the appearance of Christianity. But he is only the enemy and the hater of Our Lord. He is a traitor.

What an awful thing for such a one to approach the holy table and take God into his heart while that mortal sin is still on his soul. It is like plunging a knife into the Sacred Heart of Jesus Christ. It is the cruelty and ingratitude of Judas, the traitor and ex-apostle.

St. Paul is not the only one who wrote about mortal sin in the Bible. Our Lord had a great deal to say about it too.

A mortal sin makes of the person who has committed it a whited sepulchre in the words of Our Lord. A whited sepulchre is a tomb that is painted white on the outside, but in the interior there is only corruption and dead men's bones. Our Lord meant, in using this figure of speech that the man in mortal sin looks just like everybody else on the outside — well-dressed, handsome, healthy, happy. But his soul has died and is corruption like a corpse that has been buried in the ground.

Can one imagine a Christian placing the body and blood of Jesus Christ in the midst of such corruption? Surely that would be worse than throwing the consecrated Host to the swine in the pig pen. Surely that would be a terrible sin. It is

a terrible sin. It is a sin known as the desecration of a sacrament, a sacrilege. St. Paul maintains that anyone who receives the body of the Lord unworthily, that is, anyone who receives Holy Communion in the state of mortal sin receives the body of the Lord to his own destruction. His fate, unless the grace of sorrow comes upon him, will be the fate of Judas. Again in the words of Our Lord, "It were better if he had never been born."

Necessity of Confession

The person who is in unforgiven mortal sin must go to confession before he goes to Holy Communion. It is not enough for him to make an act of contrition and then to march up to the railing as though he had no further obligation. He must make a sincere confession and receive the absolution of the priest. After he does that, it makes no difference what the sin was, the man is allowed, and not only allowed, but urged to take Our Lord into his heart in Holy Communion.

It is not right to stay away from Communion because of past terrible sins, if the sins have been submitted to the keys of the Church in confession and been entirely forgiven. Some people persist in depriving themselves of the holy Sacrament out of fear that they are not worthy. Their action has been condemned by several popes. For a couple of hundred years millions of people labored under that same fear of unworthiness even after they made a good confession. Their fear stemmed from a heresy that was known as Jansenism, named after its founder Jansenius. The essence of Jansenism was the horrible fear of the Justice of God. One was seldom worthy to receive confession and Communion. Even once a year was almost too much.

And when one finally did work up enough courage to go to Holy Communion, one had to spend a week in the most intense and nerve-wracking preparation. Going to Holy Communion under the Jansenists was such an ordeal that one almost became a neurotic before it was over.

This, of course, was all wrong. It is still wrong. Even today some people act like the Jansenists of old.

One should not go to Communion without confession if one is certain of mortal sin. But if the mortal sin is forgiven, there is no reason in the world why one should not go to Communion frequently.

It is certain beyond doubt that fundamentally nobody is really worthy to receive in a heart that has been touched even by a small sin the all-pure God. Nobody denies the truth of that proposition. Still, in spite of our unworthiness God wants us to unite ourselves with Him. God wants us to go to Communion. The Church says that God wants it. Who is the man then who dares to say that the Church is wrong, that he is *still* too unworthy to receive Communion except once or twice a year? To hold such an opinion is to be guilty of pride and insubordination to the Church of Jesus Christ.

Venial Sins

In regard to venial sins that were committed since the last confession and that have not been confessed, such sins do not demand confession before Holy Communion. Venial sins that are common in a person's life are willful anger, gossip, lying, the misuse of God's name just in passing and as a slang expression, shouting at one's wife or husband or children, deliberate distractions in prayer, and so on.

What does one do if one has such sins upon the soul and desires to receive Communion? Of course, one may go to confession and tell the sins to the priest before receiving Communion. *But one does not have to go to confession first before going to Communion.* All one has to do is to make a fervent act of contrition and the venial sins will be removed. Either the contrition itself (if it is *perfect* contrition) will remove them or the contrition (if it is *imperfect* contrition, that is, sorrow that is based on the fear of God's punishments) joined with the Communion will remove them completely.

Some people are reluctant to admit this teaching. It may be due to their lack of knowledge as to the distinction between mortal sin and venial sin. Everything is serious to them. Therefore, when God's name slips off their tongue, or they miss their morning prayers, they feel that they must go to confession before they dare go to Communion.

These are the ones who will not go to confession until almost the moment before they go to Communion lest they do something advertently or inadvertently that may scruple them in remaining away from the holy table. This is not right. Let such people know that unless they have committed a deliberate mortal sin, they may go to Communion even though they have not gone to confession first.

At this point it might be very well to cry out a warning against a false conscience that is all too common amongst some Catholic people:

Confession is not needed for every Communion unless mortal sin intervenes. Let that statement be read twice by the readers of these lines. *One does not have to go to confession everytime one goes to Communion.* If confession and Communion always had to go together, the priest who says Mass every day would be in a fine predicament. He would have to

keep a confessor in his employment as he keeps a sexton. Otherwise the people would have no Mass.

However, this does not mean that one should *not* go to confession for months, and receive Communion every Sunday, merely because one has not committed a mortal sin. There should be a regular time for confession even though one has to say, "Father, I do not remember anything since my last confession. But I am sorry for all the sins of my past life, especially for all my sins against the fourth and sixth commandments." Frequent confession certainly can help to make the Holy Communions more fervent and worthy. Therefore they should not be neglected.

Fasting

Another requirement necessary for the proper reception of Holy Communion is fasting.

First, in regard to the drinking of water. Water no longer breaks the fast. One may drink water right up to the moment before going up to the railing and still do nothing wrong in receiving Our Lord. Formerly water did break the fast if it was taken after midnight. No longer. Gone is the worry that often existed in an older day about gargling with water, washing the teeth with water, and so forth. All the drinking and washing and gargling wanted can be done now, and the water even can be swallowed. Our Lord awaits the communicant with a smile of welcome on His face.

Secondly, in regard to the drinking of liquids other than water. The rule now is that liquids of all kinds excepting only alcoholic liquors may be drunk up until one hour before the

reception of the Sacrament. That includes coffee, tea, orange juice, milk, cream, in fact every kind of drink as long as there are no spirits either in large quantities or small making up its substance.

Thus, if one were to attend the nine o'clock Mass, and Communion would not be distributed until around nine fifteen, one could drink all one wanted to drink of non-spiritous liquids up until eight fifteen. If one were attending the twelve o'clock Mass, one could do the same up until about eleven fifteen. No longer need one die of thirst before going to Communion at a late Mass. No longer need one worry along on a completely empty stomach until the noon hour if one goes to the last Mass on Sunday morning.

Thirdly, in regard to the eating of food. The fast no longer holds from midnight as was mentioned above. There was a day when a person had to keep quite conscious of that midnight hour if a party was in progress and if a lunch was served around the hour of midnight. And there was so much worry about daylight saving time and sun time and all the other kinds of time. All that is out now and the law has been made quite simple and easy. Everybody can understand it and everybody can follow it.

The law about food is this. Food may be eaten up to three hours before going to Communion. Take the example again of the man who goes to twelve o'clock Mass on Sunday morning. He worked hard all week. He needs the extra rest that Sunday morning can give him. Until now he found it difficult to go to Communion at the twelve o'clock Mass because of the long fast that it entailed. Thus, he got to receive the Sacred Host only every couple of months. This was not good for a man who lived in the world and met a hundred temptations every day. He needed God if he was to remain in the state of grace.

Now the whole law is changed for him. He can take his breakfast at nine o'clock, providing that he finishes around nine fifteen, having bacon and eggs and any other solid food he desires. He can do even more than that. If he becomes a bit thirsty as the morning wears on, he can have a cup of coffee or tea or a large glass of milk at eleven o'clock. And still, when he goes to the noonday Mass he does no wrong in taking Our Lord into his heart in the Eucharistic feast. What could be easier than that? What excuse can he adduce now for staying away from the frequent, even the weekly reception of Holy Communion?

Finally, in regard to sick persons. Many of the bars have been let down in the interest of those who find difficulty in fasting because sickness, whether it be temporary or chronic. Sick people may take medicine without scruple right up to the time of Holy Communion. The medicine may be liquid or solid, pills or potions. There should be no hesitation on the part of sick people to avail themselves of this permission provided they are really sick. Nor does one need a doctor's certificate to prove that the sickness is real. The law says that sickness allows the use of medicine before Communion. That should be enough.

A case might be given of a woman who developed a terrible cough during the night. The only thing that would stop the wracking and torturing cough would be a good strong dose of throat medicine that a doctor had prescribed for just such emergencies. Would she be allowed to take the medicine if the hour was two o'clock in the morning and if she wanted to go to Holy Communion at the eight o'clock Mass? She certainly would. And she would commit no sin.

In fact, she would be allowed to take the cough medicine even though the irritation in the throat began at seven thirty in the morning and she intended to be present at the eight

o'clock Mass. There is no time limit conditioning the use of medicine before Holy Communion as far as the sick are concerned.

Formerly a sick person was bound to seek the permission of a confessor before she (or he) was allowed to take medicine if he or she wished to go to Communion. Such a permission need no longer be sought. *The confessor does not have to be asked.* The only condition required is that the person be sick and that the medicine be necessary in order to relieve the sickness.

In fact, permission need not be sought from the confessor any longer for any of the things mentioned above in regard to the fast and Holy Communion. It does not have to be sought for the taking of water at any time, for the taking of liquid up to one hour before Communion, for the taking of solid food up to three hours before Communion. Everything has been made easier for the faithful so that they can hardly bring forth a single valid reason for an infrequent visit to the holy table. If they stay away through their own fault, they won't have a leg to stand on when God demands the reason for their neglect of Him while they were still on earth and needed His help so much in order to stay out of serious sin.

The relaxing of the rules for the Eucharistic fast has been a great boon for children in Catholic schools. Parents were loathe formerly to allow their very little children to go to Communion in the morning if that demanded a relatively long fast and then a cold breakfast afterwards. In some schools now the Mass is had at eleven thirty in the morning. The children can take their breakfast at eight fifteen and still receive Holy Communion at eleven thirty. And then after Mass they can have their lunch. So, the new ruling can eliminate entirely the disrupting of the meal routine for the children attending school.

One small word of advice might be given here to mothers who are excessively solicitous about the physical health of their children. If it so happens that the children have to fast an hour or two before going to Communion because of the schedule of Masses in the parish church, some mothers refuse to tolerate the thought of allowing the children to suffer that fast. They maintain that going for an hour or two without food hurts the children.

They are wrong on two counts. First, they are wrong on the count that the physical health of the body is more important than the spiritual health of the soul, that a piece of bread and a bowl of gruel are more important than the divine body and blood of Jesus Christ.

And secondly, that the fasting will actually hurt the health of even the smallest child. This point surely has to be proved. There is no evidence to the effect that any child ever suffered a shrinkage of the stomach or an attack of bleeding ulcers because of putting off breakfast for an hour or two in the morning. But there is much evidence to the effect that a child can be tremendously helped by taking Our Lord into his body at a time in life when temptations are beginning to make themselves felt and when habits for good or for evil are in the process of being formed. A child who lives constantly with God has little chance of meeting moral harm along the path of life. This constant living with God is made possible through the frequent reception of the Eucharist.

Furthermore, it is often noted that vocations to the priesthood and the sisterhood are most common amongst those children who are encouraged by their parents to receive Our Lord as often as they possibly can. Parents should keep this in mind who are so worried about the bodily welfare of their children. They should remember that God will demand a stricter account of the way in which they took care of the souls of

their children than He will of the way in which they took care of the bodies of their children. Bodies, even the bodies of the children of parents, are destined to turn to dust. Parents can't stop their children's onward rush towards the grave. The souls of children are destined to live forever.

Though the *obligatory* fast for Holy Communion has been practically removed, a Catholic acts wisely if he undertakes a *voluntary* program of penance so as to make himself more worthy to receive Our Lord when the time for the reception of the holy Sacrament arrives.

If he wants to, he can keep the fast in all its rigor just as people did all along before the Holy Father made the changes. He does not have to keep it strictly, but he may keep it strictly. The Pope did not forbid people to fast if they want to fast. In fact, the Pope made a suggestion in the letter that he wrote to the world announcing the mitigated fasting rules to the effect that if people could fast before going to Holy Communion, it would be a wonderful thing. It would be most pleasing to God.

Most people, though prefer to rest from the fast for awhile. They've been following it so long that it's a comfort and a relief not to have to worry about it any longer. If that is the way they feel, they can't be entirely blamed. Maybe at some future date they can resume the fast on an optional basis, probably obtaining more merit in consequence of the voluntariness of the sacrifice than they would have, had they abstained from food and drink from midnight until Communion time because they had to. That is what the Pope means when he hints that it would be a very nice idea if people did not give up the fast entirely.

This much must be remembered. Penance is always necessary in life because Our Lord said that it is necessary. It is particularly necessary when a person is getting ready to receive

the great Sacrament. What does penance do? It pulls all the dirty roots of selfishness and self-indulgence from out the soil of the soul. It wipes all the dust of sloth and laziness off the surface of the soul. It prepares a wonderful place for the mighty Lord of the heavens to lodge when He comes down to make His visit. It gives the devils in hell who put out such mighty efforts to spoil the Lord's visit a terrific body blow from which they are unable very soon to recover. Penance is necessary for a highly profitable Communion. Everyone, therefore, should figure out his and her own penance and work at it religiously.

Faith

There is more to a fruitful and salutary reception of Holy Communion than approaching the railing after having observed to the letter the regulations on fasting and after having made sure that there is no mortal sin upon the soul, or if there is a mortal sin on the soul, after having made a good confession. One could fulfill all these conditions and still be as sterile as a dead stick as far as any solid belief in the true presence of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist was concerned. *Faith is the first requirement for a good Communion.* Without faith the Communion is not good.

Faith moves the recipient of the Sacrament to believe firmly and without reservation that the substance of the body and blood of Jesus Christ is present in the Blessed Sacrament, and that, on the word of Our Blessed Lord Himself. There is a possibility of a man going to Communion with very little of this belief in his heart. He might go to Communion merely

because Catholics do so from time to time as a part of their Catholic practice, or because it is expected of him by his mother or his wife and he does not want to involve himself in an argument.

It should not be difficult for a Catholic who is instructed in his holy religion to believe in the Blessed Sacrament firmly and without hesitation. The evidence in favor of the presence of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist is so strong that it hardly can be denied.

There are the proofs from Scripture as those proofs have already been outlined in this booklet. Then, there is the proof from history, namely, the fact that all Christians through all the Centuries believed in the real presence of Jesus Christ under the appearance of bread and wine on the word of Jesus Christ. Finally, there is the proof of innumerable miracles that have been worked in connection with the Blessed Sacrament that leave no doubt in the mind of reasonable men that the Sacred Host is indeed the living God upon the altar.

Miracles

The story is told of a Catholic man who lost his holy religion. Not only did he lose it, but he grew angry at it and began to hate it. Why is it that so many people seem unable to leave the Catholic religion alone once they give it up? They have to join organizations that are opposed to it and do everything in their power to wipe it from the face of the earth. Perhaps it is a kind of defense mechanism. A man tries to defend by violent gestures and sacrilegious proclamations the

wisdom of an action that he knows in his heart was unwise from the very start.

At any rate, this man grew to hate the Catholic Church in which he was baptized so much that he could find no peace of mind until he discovered a way whereby he could give her a severe and unhealing hurt. That was how he came upon the idea of attacking and destroying the Sacred Host. He mapped out his program well. This is what he did.

One Sunday morning he went to Mass in the parish church. At Communion time he approached the railing just like the rest of the people. But his intentions were quite different from those of the other people. He would prove to himself once and for all that there was nothing to this business of the presence of God on earth in the Sacrament of the altar. He would prove that the Catholic Church was a fake for teaching so fantastic a doctrine. This was the chance that he had been waiting for a long time. But he would have to be careful lest he be caught in his scheme and prevented from carrying it out.

Very piously he put out his tongue at the proper moment and the priest, not suspecting anything evil in the man's heart, placed the consecrated Host upon it. The man closed his mouth and returned to his pew. Looking around to make sure that he was not being observed he drew a handkerchief from his pocket, put it to his mouth and ejected the Host that he had just received into its folds. Then, bunching up the handkerchief, he replaced it in his pocket, made a very pious genuflection and left the church.

He could hardly wait to get home to carry out the terrible plan that he had in his mind. He was determined to tear the Host up in pieces, to cut it up into such fine parts that there wouldn't be a speck of it left. That would be a sign that there

was nothing to the Blessed Sacrament, that in truth it was nothing more than a piece of bread.

At last he arrived at his home. Carefully he closed the front door of the house behind him. Fortunately there was no one at home at the time. After laying the handkerchief on a table and opening it up so that the Host was exposed, he secured a sharp-pointed knife. Then, without delay he brought the knife far above his head and drove it down with all his force into the holy Species before him.

It was as though he had plunged the knife into a living body. The Host was bleeding like a severed vein or artery. The blood flowed over the table and dripped down onto the floor. The knife fell from the man's hands and a great fear came over him. This was something that he had not anticipated. This overthrew entirely his disbelief in the reality of Christ's sacramental presence. He did not wait to see the end of his experiment. With a cry of fear upon his lips he fled from the house.

The members of his family found the bleeding Host. It was seen by many people before the parish priest could get to the house in order to carry the blood-soaked handkerchief and the blood-red Host to the church. There the Host was consumed at the next Mass. The handkerchief was placed in a rich and gem-incrusted container and on special occasions was hung up in a public place for the veneration of the people.

Of course, it is easy for a skeptic to deny that such an event ever happened or that there is any miraculous significance to it if it did happen. But thousands of men and women have viewed the blood-covered handkerchief. Millions of people have accepted the strange occurrence as an exercise of the power of God for the enlarging of men's faith in the Blessed Sacrament. And the Church has put her stamp upon it, not as

an article of doctrine that has to be believed, but rather as an event that really happened and that certainly can be believed as miraculous without naivete or credulousness.

Another story is told of St. Louis, king of France, and an experience that he had with the Blessed Sacrament.

One day the king was doing some work in his office when a servant of the palace rushed into the room and cried out that the king must come immediately to the chapel because the priest who was saying Mass there had just finished the words of consecration and instead of the consecrated Host resting on the altar as it should, there sat on the corporal in the place of the Host a most beautiful little boy. The people in the chapel were astounded. And the priest was so bewildered that he did not know what to do next. "Come," insisted the servant, "you must behold the miracle of the Lord."

King Louis was known for his strong faith in the real presence of Jesus Christ in the Blessed Sacrament. This time his faith was really to be tested. But it passed the test. When the servant had finished the story, the king turned back to his work at the desk remarking that such miracles were for those whose faith was weak. As far as he was concerned, he did not need a miracle to convince him of the truth of the doctrine of the Blessed Sacrament.

When people have a faith as strong as that, the grace of God literally leaps into every corner of their soul as the result of their Communion. When they do not have such faith, God withholds the helps that otherwise their Communion would give them. But why should they not have such faith? The evidence for the truth of the Blessed Sacrament is neither weak nor meagre. God Himself says that is true. Can God tell a lie? Whoever believes God when God speaks practices faith. If one wants to test the truth of God's statement about His presence

in the tabernacle, all one has to do is consult history, that is, the unchangeable belief of Christian people from the beginning and the miracles that people have seen in association with the Blessed Sacrament from the beginning.

God is not expecting or demanding too much of a man to expect of him and to demand of him a strong faith when he goes to Holy Communion. After all, a man has to make some small contribution in order to gain profit from the Sacrament. God did enough in instituting it in the first place and then in consenting to bury Himself in the human heart as often as the request for such a startling lowering of Himself be made. It is not too much to ask a man to believe God when He says that the bread is changed into His body and blood. It is not too much to expect of a man a strong and unwavering faith in the truth of words of God. Surely faith is not too high a price for the body and blood of Christ.

Emotionalism

It goes without saying that faith in the Blessed Sacrament does not have to show itself in a liquid emotionalism that expresses itself in much weeping and breast-striking and loud sighing and sorrowing, much after the fashion of the person who has met his mother or his father after long years of separation.

The emotions have their place in religion, and those who deny them a place are treading on dangerous ground. Some of the extremists in the Church do not hesitate to scoff at anything in the devotion and the faith of the people that brings

forth even the tiniest flare of emotion. Religion must be classically cold and severe. At least it must be shorn of all things that in any way at all would stir up emotion or feeling. Only thus can the real needs of the soul be served. So they say.

This is false. There is room in religion for emotion. Man is made up of both body and soul. And with both his body and his soul does he adore God. It is hard to adore God with the body if the emotions, so vital a part of the body, are suppressed. So, emotion, if properly controlled, is in perfect order.

But let not the belief take over the soul that a Holy Communion is no good unless the presence of God is actually *felt* in the body, unless one glows all over at the very thought of God coming down from heaven and taking up His residence in the heart. Emotion is not required for the proper and worthy reception of *any* of the sacraments. One could be as dry as a week-old crumb on a bakery floor and still receive the full treatment of God's curative and strengthening grace during the time of His union with the soul after Holy Communion.

Many of the saints felt no emotion for many years when they went to Holy Communion. At other times God would fill them with emotion. So it was with St. Phillip Neri. He would weep copiously whenever he said Mass. So it is today with the celebrated Capuchin friar over in Italy, Father Pio, who is blessed with the stigmata, that is, with the nail-prints of Christ's passion in his hands and in his feet. He also weeps when he says Mass, so great is the emotion that he experiences.

This is exceptional. Emotion as a result of Communion is a special gift that God gives to some people for reasons known only to Himself. To other people He does not give the gift. They need not worry in consequence. On the word of the Church their Holy Communions are worthy.

The Immediate Preparation

One should not approach the Communion railing without first preparing the soul with a few cleansing and disinfecting prayers. It is wise always to make a fervent act of contrition, with special emphasis on the resolution not to commit any more sins in the future, and particularly on the day on which the Lord is received.

It is also good to make acts of faith (especially if the faith is a bit weak), acts of hope and confidence in God, and above all acts of the love of God. Holy Communion, as was stated several times in the lines above, is the sacrament of love, the sacrament of the union between God and man. It is God giving Himself to man. No doubt God could find better things to do in heaven than to come down to earth and enter the heart of a man who perhaps in the past committed a thousand sins against Him. Yet actually He does come down. He comes down with His tremendous power, with His towering love, with His desire to give help.

What can a man do under such circumstances except cry out his love in return? What kind of a man is he who does not even mention that he loves God even though God is about to give Himself to him entirely? Always fervent acts of love should be made before the Lord is received.

One can hardly do better in the way of preparation for Communion than to say the Mass prayers in English that the priest says in Latin.

The Church has given permission for the distribution of Communion outside of the Mass; and that's that. There should

be no argument about it. No ordinary person in the ranks, be he priest or lay person, be she holy nun or graduate of learned colleges and advance-guard schools, knows better how and when Holy Communion should be received than the Holy Father, the vicar of Christ and the defender of the deposit of Christian revelation.

Those are to be found who would not distribute Holy Communion outside of Mass if their head were to fall in consequence. They make the time of the reception of the Sacrament more important than the Sacrament itself. The Pope does not hold with them in their opinion.

Still, according to the teaching of the Popes, even though Holy Communion *may* be received outside of Mass, it is better if it is received *during* Mass.

The Mass and Holy Communion go together. The consumption of the Holy Host symbolizes the death of Our Lord on the cross. Receiving Communion at Mass makes possible a much richer participation in the Mass. The Mass in all its fullness is not just for the priest. It is for everybody from the oldest to the youngest, from the most holy to the most sinful. Therefore, everybody from top to bottom should try to go to Communion with the priest during the Mass.

If this is done, no better prayers can be found for the preparing of the throne that will be occupied by the King than the ancient prayers of the missal. In fact, many of these prayers were written with this idea in mind, that those who would say them would be receiving Communion with the priest. If no other preparatory prayers were said at all except the prayers of the Mass, the Mass prayers would suffice because they contain over and over again the acts of contrition, love of God, hope and faith. What more is needed?

External Deportment

At the time of Holy Communion there should be respect in one's posture, modesty in one's vesture and devotion in one's demeanor.

Respect means that one should not slouch at the railing, or slouch up to the railing, look around at every noise in the back of the church, keep too close a watch on the neighbor, let the hands dangle at the side as they would were one walking down the street, appear before Our Lord in dirty clothes, unkempt hair and nails that have not seen or felt a file in a month.

When one is in the presence of the queen of England, one shows respect. So also should one show respect when one is in the waiting line for the imminent arrival of the King of heaven. If one does not show the proper respect, the Lord may ask some embarrassing questions about the absence of the wedding garment. The ones in the Bible story who appeared before the Master without a wedding garment were lifted bodily from the room and cast outside into the darkness.

Modesty in one's vesture also is demanded when one comes near the God of all innocence and purity. This applies particularly to the ladies. The styles of the moment rather than decency and purity sometimes dictate what a woman, even a Catholic woman, should wear. May God have mercy on the souls of those who through the nakedness or semi-nakedness of their bodies do the devil's work in leading souls into serious sin.

Unfortunately women sometimes dress this way even when they kneel at the railing waiting to come face to face with

Jesus Christ. Their neck-lines are entirely too low, the amount of clothing they are wearing is too meagre and the kind of clothing entirely inappropriate for the occasion. Shorts, beach-wear, tight-fitting slacks are not proper for Holy Communion when there is no necessity for such clothes. A woman does not have to dress up in shawls and dresses and voluminous coverings that will make her look like a sack rather than like a woman. But surely God is too spotless and all pure not to be honored by reasonably modest clothing. Nakedness does not tempt or scandalize Him. But it can tempt and scandalize others. That is why it is so displeasing to the Lord.

Even though nobody is tempted and scandalized at all, there is something very unfitting in appearing naked or half-naked before the King of Kings. It shows an extreme disregard for the sacredness of God. It shows no fear of God. It is almost enough to bring down a clap of thunder on the heads of such offenders. If there is any time in life when God should be shown great respect, it is at the time of Communion. Respect demands reasonably modest clothing.

And finally there should be piety and devotion in one's demeanor when Communion is received. In other words one should try to keep one's mind on what one is doing at the time of the reception of Communion. There is no devotion in the man or the woman who takes the holy Sacrament out of routine and gives hardly a thought to the stupendous event that is transpiring — the advent of Almighty God upon the earth. Devotion demands the putting of one's whole heart and soul into the matter, of doing all that the rubrics and custom demand for the devout acceptance of the body of Our Lord. A man's devotion depends on a man's faith. If his faith is strong, his devotion, or the way he handles himself in the receiving of Holy Communion, will be right.

At the exact moment of the reception of Communion the tongue should be put out, neither too far nor not far enough,

but sufficiently far so as to form a surface on which the Lord can comfortably rest. The eyes should be closed, the head bent slightly back. The mouth should not be closed with a snap the moment the priest moves on after touching the tongue with the Host.

As soon as it can conveniently be done, the recipient should try to swallow the Host. The reason for this is the fact that Holy Communion is not actually received until the Host is swallowed. Our Lord said, "Unless you *eat* my body . . ." Eating the body of Our Lord consists not in *chewing* the holy elements (the Host should *not* be chewed) but in *swallowing* them. Therefore it is good if the mouth is kept a trifle moist so that the Host will not stick to the tongue or the surface of the mouth with the result that the Host cannot be swallowed until it has dissolved.

After swallowing the Host, the correct thing to do is to turn around and without a genuflection to the altar go back to the pew and make a thanksgiving that will last at least ten or fifteen minutes. There is no need for a genuflection to the tabernacle because the Occupant of the tabernacle is now present in the heart.

The prayers of the thanksgiving will depend on the depth of the devotion and the faith that penetrate the soul. If faith and devotion are strong, the first few minutes of the thanksgiving will be given over to spontaneous aspirations of thanks to God for deigning to come down, of love and affection, of sorrow for sin and resolution not to commit sin in the future, of petition for the things that are needed most in soul and body. These first prayers should be said without prayerbook. They need not be said with the lips. They should arise from the soul as the fragrance rises from a flower.

It would seem that a person born and bred in the Catholic religion, brought up on a regular fare of prayers to God, the

Blessed Mother and the saints should have no trouble at all in concentration with some little success on the miracle that has just been worked in his favor. God has come down to him in person. He has not sent an angel or a saint or one of the prophets of old. He has not even sent His mother. He Himself took time off from the running of the universe in order to pay a visit to a friend of His on earth. Can anything more magnificent than that ever happen to anybody no matter who the person is?

Suppose a man were to be offered the choice of meeting the president of the United States or, in the case of a young person, the chance of meeting the most glamorous and famous of the stars of the movies. Probably there would be no sleep the night before the momentous event was scheduled to take place. And what vast preparations would go into the choice of clothes, the hairdo and all the other things that touched the outward appearance. If the meeting were to be televised, all the relatives and friends would be alerted to be sure and have their sets tuned at the proper time.

And then, when at last the moment arrived to see and even to talk to the great person, the words undoubtedly would gush out of the mouth like water from a spigot — requests for autographs, for pictures, for hints on how to be a celebrated actor or actress and so forth.

No distractions from friends or even from family would be allowed to interfere with the interview. No book would be needed in order that the mind might be kept strictly on the subject and in order that the catastrophe might be avoided of running out of things to talk about.

How different is it not when the interview is held with Our Lord in Holy Communion. One would almost think that the

president of the United States or some well-curled or well-bosomed character from Hollywood had more to offer than the mighty God Himself. Not even three minutes of personal conversation can be had with Jesus Christ after Communion without a million stray thoughts wandering into the mind as though they had a right to come in and go out as much as they pleased like a star boarder, and not even the one who raised Lazarus from the dead is big enough to block them out.

What is wrong with people that they cannot talk to the Lord about their love for Him or at least about their desire to have a strong love for Him, their hope in Him, their belief in Him even for a few minutes after the reception of Holy Communion?

Why can't they close their eyes (for the shutting out of distractions) and tell Him about their troubles in their own words? They have plenty of troubles. All one has to do is lend an open ear to them on any day of the week and one will hear enough almost to be deafened forevermore. But what can an ordinary human being do to remove or to soften the troubles of the neighbor especially when the troubles are quite insoluble? Not much at all except to keep the ear open and the tongue on its hinges for the expressing of a few words of sympathy the moment the opportunity presents itself.

The same inability or incapacity cannot be said about God. He is willing to listen just like everybody else who has been blessed with the gift of pity. But He can do something about the troubles. He is the one who rolls the thunder across the sky, who strikes the matches in the heavens that make the lightning. Is it possible that He could not take care of the troubles that an individual has if that individual bright and early each morning seized hold of Him and pressed Him to his heart till the divine beating of the Sacred Heart silenced the throbbing sorrows of the human heart?

But God must be asked for His help. He wants to be asked. Very possibly He won't take care of the problem that needs solution unless He is asked. So He has arranged. That is why it is so imperative that a short space of time immediately after the reception of Holy Communion be given over to extemporaneous, personal, intimate conversation with Our Lord. The very word "Communion" means that — to "commune" with, to talk to Him with whom the communion is established.

Distractions

Let no one draw the conclusion that in view of the fact that many distractions keep pestering the mind all during the thanksgiving and especially during those first precious moments (that is when the devil is most busy, for he knows the value of those first moments after the communion with God has been effected), there isn't much point or use in trying too hard to concentrate on one's own improvised prayers and petitions because the thanksgiving simply can't be any good.

It is too bad that the mind cannot stick to the subject for so short a time when the subject to be thought about is God. But often times it can't. The fact has to be admitted. And there isn't very much that can be done about it. Whether God is present or not, extraneous and worldly thoughts keep pouring in like flies through a screen that is full of holes. It is discouraging to say the least. And one wonders what God thinks about it all.

One thing is sure — God doesn't think anything bad about it. That is the absolute truth. God is not worried about the

distractions that can torture the mind unless, of course, the distractions are deliberate. If one does not try to keep out the distractions, God is not pleased. If one tries to keep out the distractions by constantly struggling against the onslaughts of the world, the flesh and the devil, God is highly pleased and very probably calls the attention of the angels and the saints to the fine battle that is being waged.

Distractions are not sins in themselves. They become sins only when they are wilfully caused, or on coming into the mind they are wilfully consented to and enjoyed. To cultivate distracting thoughts at the time of Communion is like putting Our Lord into the corner of a deep drawer and closing the drawer when in fact He should be occupying the best chair in the room. Our Lord is not one who demands attention. But He is God. And as God He has certain rights that He cannot very well abdicate.

Frequency of Holy Communion

How often should Communion be received? An answer can be given to this question from various points of view.

First, from the point of view of the universal Church and of all the peoples in all the countries of the world who make up the universal Church.

The law of the Church for all the people of the world is that they receive Holy Communion at least once a year, and that, during the Easter season which is from the first Sunday of Lent until Trinity Sunday, sixty days after Easter. So, during a period of time consisting of one hundred days every Catholic in the world who possibly can do so must receive Holy Communion.

This sounds rather easy-going and lax. Only once a year? Yes, only once a year *according to the strict law*. The law embraces everybody, the Alaskans as well as the victims of Communism behind the Iron Curtain. For some of these people Communion more than once a year is almost impossible. There are few priests. There are almost no Masses. Christians may have to travel many, many miles before they can find a church where they can receive Our Lord. So, the Church in her consideration and understanding tells such people to make a strong effort to approach the holy table *at least once a year*. That should be possible for almost everybody in the world who has faith enough to know what the Eucharist is.

Not to go to Communion during the Easter Season, which is called "making one's Easter duty," is a mortal sin. The negligence does not excommunicate the culprit from the Church but it does put him or her in a very dangerous position. If death were to intervene before a confession could be made, the everlasting punishment of hell might be the result. God forbid that that should happen to anyone reading these lines.

The serious advice of the Church is that Holy Communion should be received as often as possible — surely every month, possibly every Sunday and if it can be done, every day. There is no better place for lovers of God to start the day each day than at the foot of the altar where Our Lord is waiting to welcome them and to fill their heart and their soul and their body with His divine presence. How can anything really harmful happen during the day to those who go to Communion each morning?

It would be a matter of grave importance for parents of growing children to go to Communion every day. The reason, over and above the salvation of their own soul, is the welfare of their children. They do not want their children to turn out to be failures, temporal or eternal, in the future. Well, the

future of the children depends on the present, which is in the hands of the mother and the father. The power of the parents to help the children does not depend too much on the commands the parents give and the corrections they make. Rather it depends on how they stand with God. Even the most spiritual command and advice will mean little if it comes from that which is the equivalent of a corrupting swamp. And that is the condition of the soul of the mother and the father who are not close to God.

God will work through the parents for the future happiness and success of the children if the parents are willing to make the sacrifice of going to Communion as often as they can. Imagine the power the parents wield over their children if no day passes without their kneeling at the railing in order to gather God into their arms so that He may be brought home for the protection and the spiritualizing of the children! What harm can ever come to children who have parents like that?

Daily Communion is a "must" also for young people preparing for marriage by means of courtship. These young people, no matter how high their ideals, know that there is fire in their blood. They are fully aware of the fact that it is not easy for two young people deeply in love with one another to remain pure and innocent when they are out on a date. The following statement is made without fear of contradiction. *Young people will be able to remain pure on their dates if they go to Communion daily with great fervor and faith.*

Daily Communion is the answer to many of the questions that are raised in the life of teen-agers. Perhaps teen-agers of all people have the hardest time these days to stay near to God. They are hounded on all sides by a pagan world that would convince them that whatever they feel like doing is all right as long as they do not get into trouble or cause

trouble to others. Their passions are growing stronger every day. They want to be independent of authority. They are surrounded by bad example. Who can save them except God? And where can they find God except in the daily reception of the Eucharist?

For all people, old and young, rich and poor, learned and unlearned, the daily reception of Holy Communion is a sign of predestination. Who is the person who is not afraid of what is going to happen after death? Will the sins of the past, even though they have been confessed with sorrow and sincere resolution against their repetition, be brought forth by God at the end as a cause for condemnation?

That fear makes one very unsure about heaven. It makes one tremble at the thought of appearing before God and giving an account of all the thoughts, words and deeds of life. Sometimes the thought insists on coming into the mind that there isn't going to be much chance of being happy in eternity. The sins of the past are simply too many and too great.

At this point an unqualified reassurance can be given and can be had. If daily Communion was the pattern of life for many years before death, and if these many Communion were received fervently, there is moral certitude that heaven is the place where the soul will live for all eternity. What was it that Our Lord said? "If any man eat My Body and drink My Blood, *that man will have life everlasting.*" There is the promise of God. And God tells no lies. He said that the person who receives frequently, every day if such a thing is possible, *will not go to hell.*

Holy Communion, therefore, is the safest insurance that a Christian can take out on a home in heaven. It is backed not only by the bank of heaven but by the word of God. It is the surest thing in the world. In fact, it is not even a gamble. Any

Catholic who refuses to pick up this insurance, especially in view of the very low rates (a few hours fast; the state of grace) is not very convinced about the length of eternity, about the wondrous happiness of heaven and the terrible pains of hell. The Holy Father is so convinced of the power of Holy Communion to get people to heaven that he allows children just coming to the use of reason to approach the altar and take Our Lord into their hearts.

An objection can be raised here, and often is raised, to the effect that it would seem that Our Lord's words should not be interpreted in so literal a sense. The objectors propose two arguments to uphold their contention.

First, they say that there have been many cases of people who received Holy Communion almost daily and later on lost the faith and did not come back even on their deathbeds. The early reformers were such cases. Martin Luther, who was a priest, who abandoned his priesthood and founded Protestantism, said Mass everyday for many years. Of course, he received Our Lord in his Masses as does every priest when he says Mass.

Yet Martin Luther died outside the Catholic Church, hating and damning the Catholic Church and everything connected with it. If Martin Luther was not the victim of hallucinations, insanity or complete ignorance, and if he did not repent before he died, he surely lost his soul. What is to be said, then, about his frequenting the Sacrament of the altar every day for so many years before finally falling away from the Catholic religion entirely? Why did not Communion save him?

Other cases are told of girls who went through a Catholic academy and received Holy Communion regularly for the whole time they attended the school. Shortly after they grad-

uated, they fell in love with a divorced man and attempted marriage with him. Some of them lived in an invalid marriage and died in an invalid marriage. What about them? Why did not Holy Communion keep them from the danger of losing their soul?

The answer is this.

There must have been something wrong with the Holy Communions that were received. Our Lord was not received with the proper dispositions. Possibly these people were not even in the state of grace when they went to Communion. Possibly Martin Luther, even while he was saying Mass, was denying in his own mind, as he did so vehemently later on by word of mouth, the validity of the sacrifice of the Mass and the truth of the real presence of Jesus Christ under the appearance of bread and wine. Perhaps the girls from their freshman year on never fully prepared themselves for the Sacrament and never made a good thanksgiving afterwards.

Whatever the explanation, it is certain that the failure was on their part and not on the part of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ promised all those who received Him fervently the rewards of heaven. Quite definitely He meant, even though He did not spell it out in so many words, that the Communion would have to be sincere as well as frequent. It would be a funny business if all one had to do was to go to Communion no matter what the dispositions.

Secondly, the objectors say that a literal interpretation of Christ's words will send all Protestants and Jews to hell who do not believe in the Blessed Sacrament. We answer at once that such a conclusion is entirely unwarranted.

God judges people according to their conscience. If they never heard of the Blessed Sacrament and felt no qualms of conscience in not receiving it, surely God won't hold them

guilty of breaking His command. Nobody can be guilty of a deed that will condemn him to hell unless he *knows* that he is doing wrong and willingly goes ahead and performs the deed anyway.

So, the ignorance of non-Catholics as to the truth of the real presence is no argument at all against the statement that he who receives Holy Communion fervently and frequently is morally certain of going to heaven.

The Effects of Holy Communion

The effects produced by a frequent and fervent reception of Holy Communion are almost unbelievable.

First and foremost, the commission of serious sin is prevented. A man may have passions as strong as the most decadent and immoral person in the world. The temptations may be innumerable. Still, in spite of the drive of passion and the wearing force of temptation, the soul is able to remain free from mortal sin. This is a miracle of the highest order, especially if the resistance to mortal sin has to go on over a long period of time. There is no doctor, no specific medicine, no scientific legerdemain that can bring about so astounding and miraculous an effect.

Secondly, Holy Communion can take away venial sin. If there is venial sin on a soul before Holy Communion and the one who receives makes a good act of contrition just before going up to the railing, even though the contrition is based only on the fear of God's punishment in purgatory, the venial sins are forgiven the moment the Lord is enfolded in the embrace of the heart. There are some who believe that venial sin can be taken away only by confession. They are mistaken.

Contrition and Communion can bring about the cure completely.

Thirdly, Holy Communion can strengthen the soul to such an extent that it may be able to do the most heroic things for Almighty God in the future. There are many examples not only in the lives of saints proving the truth of this statement but also in the lives of ordinary, everyday Christian men and women who bear the burdens and the heats of the day without complaining and without ever even giving a thought to the possibility of collapsing and giving up.

They allow the children to come to them that God wants them to have; they raise their children according to Christian principles; they live up to their holy religion in all the demands and commands that she gives them. They lead heroic lives, unsung and unrewarded here on earth but someday to be recompensed a thousandfold in the house of God. *It is the frequent reception of Holy Communion that makes this heroism possible.* Without the real presence of God in their hearts they would never rise above the mediocre in the pursuit of personal perfection and hidden sanctity.

However, the power of the Blessed Sacrament is proved for all the world to see in the lives of the saints. And in the life of no modern saint is it proved more completely than in the life of the great North American martyr, St. John Brebeuf.

Spiritual Communion

There are times when it is quite impossible for a devout person to receive Holy Communion. When one is sick and cannot retain the Sacred Host on the stomach; when riding on a train, when there is no priest nearby who can give out the

Blessed Sacrament; when one has inadvertently broken one's fast.

What can be done by the person who wants to go to Holy Communion and cannot because of circumstances that render a pilgrimage to the holy table quite out of the question?

An act of *spiritual* Communion can be made.

Perhaps the best way of explaining the meaning of an act of spiritual Communion is to give an example. The following is the act of spiritual Communion that was written by St. Alphonsus Liguori. It has the full approval of the Church. "My Jesus, I believe that Thou are present in the Blessed Sacrament of the altar. I love Thee above all things. I desire to receive Thee into my heart. Since I am unable to receive Thee sacramentally, I wish to receive Thee at least spiritually. I embrace Thee as though Thou wert already in my heart and unite myself entirely to Thee. Never permit me to be separated from Thee."

It has been said many times that Our Lord hears every word we say to Him. Even "My Jesus, help me" is registered in heaven and will receive its answer. Surely then an act of spiritual Communion is heard. Surely God comes down in spirit and occupies a place in the heart.

Spiritual Communion is a most wonderful and efficacious form of prayer. It should be used often. If the form of spiritual Communion of St. Alphonsus Liguori does not appeal to a man, let him make up his own. It is the desire for the possession of God that counts, not the form of the words used. Spiritual Communion should be accompanied by acts of faith, hope, love and contrition just as as is real Communion. And favors should be asked for too. God wants it that way.

However, in spite of the value of spiritual Communion, there is nothing this side of heaven that can take the place of real Communion — the joining of the human and the divine, of God and man in a union so close that only a God could conceive it and make its operation possible. If man realized what he had and what miracles resulted from it if he made use of it to the fullest possible extent, the railings of the Catholic churches would not be as empty as they are around the country and around the world.

May Mary, the mother of God, enlighten men's minds with a true understanding of the Blessed Sacrament. And may she strengthen their wills to use the Blessed Sacrament often and with great fervor. Therein lies their salvation.



Printed in U.S.A.