



MARIAN CATECHIST APOSTOLATE
INTERNATIONAL OFFICE
MEMORANDUM

TO: ALL MEMBERS
FROM: RAYMOND LEO CARDINAL BURKE, INTERNATIONAL DIRECTOR
SUBJECT: MAKING AN ACT OF PERFECT CONTRITION AND A SPIRITUAL COMMUNION
DATE: MARCH 25, 2020

What is the plan for Catholic lay faithful during this crisis or any crisis when Holy Mass and the Sacrament of Penance are not available?

Domestic Church

The Catholic lay faithful should make their homes, which are the domestic Church, places of prayer, reflecting the truth that Christ is the constant guest of every Christian home. Each family member or resident in the home should strive to live more closely in communion with Christ, seeking needed graces for the home, for the neighborhood, the wider community, and the world. At the same time, he or she should be a source of edification and consolation to the other members of the family or household. The spiritual means for the more intimate union with Christ in the home and, thus, the more intimate communion with the others in the home are:

- Praying together as a family throughout the day, for example, upon rising and before retiring; before and after meals;
- Praying the Holy Rosary, invoking insistently Our Lady's intercession, while meditating upon the mysteries of the Redemptive Incarnation;
- Praying the Chaplet of Divine Mercy each day for the earthly assistance and eternal salvation of all who will die that day;
- Reading aloud passages from the Sacred Scripture, for example the Gospel for the day, or from reliable spiritual books, especially from the lives of the saints;
- Enthroning the image of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and enshrining the image of the Immaculate Heart of Mary;
- Watching inspirational religious movies;
- Giving witness to your faith in daily living, especially at home, such as practicing more patience with family members, calling the elderly who may be isolated, and providing groceries to homebound neighbors;
- Nourishing your faith through the Sacraments, especially regular Confession and frequent reception of Holy Communion; and, when these Sacraments are not accessible, making frequent Acts of Perfect Contrition and Spiritual Communions, including the introduction

of regular times throughout the day for making the Act of Perfect Contrition and for Spiritual Communion.

How to Make a Spiritual Communion

For those who do not have access to Holy Mass and Holy Communion, I commend the devout practice of making a Spiritual Communion. When we are rightly disposed to receive Holy Communion, that is, when we are in the state of grace, not conscious of having committed any mortal sins which we have not confessed and for which we have not received sacramental absolution, and we desire to receive Our Lord in Holy Communion but are unable to do so, we can make a Spiritual Communion. If we are aware of any mortal sin on our soul, then we should first make an Act of Perfect Contrition.

To make a Spiritual Communion:

1. First, make an Act of Perfect Contrition, if you are aware of any mortal sin on your soul.
2. Unite yourself spiritually with the offering of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.
3. Pray Saint Alphonsus Liguori's prayer to Our Eucharistic Lord:

My Jesus, I believe that Thou art truly present in the Most Blessed Sacrament. I love Thee above all things and I desire to receive Thee into my soul. Since I cannot now receive Thee sacramentally, come at least spiritually into my heart. I embrace Thee as if Thou wert already come, and unite myself wholly to Thee; never permit me to be separated from Thee. Amen.

4. A short aspiration may also be offered, such as, "Jesus, Love, come into my heart!" This aspiration is aimed at growing in love for our Eucharistic Lord.

Making a Spiritual Communion is a beautiful expression of love for Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament. Spiritual Communions have been cherished by many saints. You can read some inspiring examples of this in Father Stefano Manelli's book, *Jesus Our Eucharistic Love*. Great saints such as Saint Francis de Sales and Saint Maximilian Mary Kolbe resolved to make a spiritual communion every 15 minutes or so. Such Spiritual Communions need not be long and protracted but, preferably, short and "to the point," but most especially with great love and devotion. It is a wonderful way to practice the presence of God throughout the day and live a life truly centered upon the Holy Eucharist. Spiritual Communions will not fail to bring to us abundant grace.

How to Make an Act of Perfect Contrition

At the same time, when we are conscious of having committed a mortal sin and are unable to have access to the Sacrament of Penance or Confession, the Church invites us to make an Act of Perfect Contrition, that is, of sorrow for sin, which "arises from a love by which God is loved above all else."

An Act of Perfect Contrition "obtains forgiveness of mortal sins if it includes the firm resolution to have recourse to sacramental confession as soon as possible" (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 1452). An Act of Perfect Contrition disposes our soul for Spiritual Communion.

Consequently, an Act of Perfect Contrition may save your soul at death, if no priest is near to provide the Last Sacraments. Everyone should learn how to make an Act of Perfect Contrition and to teach it to others, especially to those who are near death. Even though perfect contrition washes away mortal sin, it is necessary to receive the Sacrament of Penance before receiving Holy Communion.

To make an act of perfect contrition:

1. Prepare by stirring up in your heart a pure and ardent love for God. Look upon a crucifix and reflect upon the sufferings of Christ; He is fastened to the Cross for love of you.
2. Recall His goodness and the great love He has shown for you. Reflect on how ungrateful you have been to Him in return for His goodness.
3. Prepare further by pondering the following reflection by Father Lasance:

Consider Who He is, and how good and gracious He is to you, Whom you have so often and so deeply offended by these sins. He made you—He made you for Himself, to know, love and serve Him, and to be happy with Him forever. He redeemed you by His blood. He has borne with you and waited for you so long. He it is Who has called you and moved you to repentance. Why so ungrateful? What more could He do for you? Oh, be ashamed, and mourn, and despise yourself, because you have sinned against your Maker and your Redeemer, Whom you ought to love above all things.

Consider the consequences of even one mortal sin. By it you lose the grace of God. You destroy peace of conscience; you forfeit the felicity of Heaven, for which you were created and redeemed; and you prepare for yourself eternal punishment. If we grieve for the loss of temporal and earthly things, how much more should we grieve for having deliberately exposed ourselves to the loss of those which are eternal and heavenly!

Consider how great is the love of God for you, if only from this, that He hath so long waited for you, and spared you, when He might have so justly cast you into Hell. Behold Him fastened to the cross for love of you! Behold Him pouring forth His precious blood as a fountain to cleanse you from your sins! Hear Him saying, “I thirst,” — “I thirst with an ardent desire for your salvation!” Behold Him stretching out His arms to embrace you, and waiting until you should come to yourself and turn unto Him, and throw yourself before Him, and say, “Father, I have sinned against Heaven and before Thee, and am no more worthy to be called Thy son.” Let these considerations touch your heart with love for Him Who so loves you, and love will beget true contrition, most acceptable to God.¹

4. Pray slowly and sincerely one of the following acts of contrition:
 - a. O my God, I am heartily sorry and beg pardon for all my sins, NOT SO MUCH because these sins bring suffering and Hell to me, but because they have crucified my loving Savior Jesus Christ and offended Thy infinite goodness. I

¹ *My Prayer Book, Happiness in Goodness, Reflections, Counsels, Prayers and Devotions*, Rev. Francis X. Lasance, (NY: Benziger Brothers, Inc., 1908), p. 350.

firmly resolve, with the help of Thy grace, to confess my sins, to do penance and to amend my life. Amen.²

- b. O my God, I am heartily sorry for having offended Thee, and I detest all my sins, because I dread the loss of Heaven and the pains of Hell; but most of all because they offend Thee, my God, Who art all good and deserving of all my love. I firmly resolve, with the help of Thy grace, to confess my sins, to do penance, and to amend my life. Amen.
- c. Or, as an aspiration, say frequently: O my God, I am sorry for having offended Thee, because Thou art so good and I love Thee.

Remember: An Act of Perfect Contrition **takes away mortal sins immediately**, however, it requires the intention to confess them in the Sacrament of Penance at our first opportunity.

² *My Military Missal*, Edited by Rev. Joseph F. Stedman, (Brooklyn, NY: Confraternity of the Precious Blood, 1942), p. 111.