

LITTLE HANDBOOK ON THE EUCHARIST

*Prayers before and After Mass;
and Meditations for Visiting the Blessed Sacrament by St. Alphonsus Ligouri*



“Behold the Bread of Angels made the Food of the Wayfarers, the True Bread of the Children which must not be given to the dogs”

Praying the Mass

by St. Alphonsus Liguori, Bishop and Doctor of the Church

Translated by the Rev. Eugene Grimm, C.Ss.R.

In order to pray the Mass with devotion, it is necessary to know that the Sacrifice of the Altar is the same as that which was once offered on Calvary, with this difference: that on Calvary the Blood of Jesus Christ was really shed, but on the Altar it is shed only in a mystical, sacramental way. Had you been present on Calvary, you would have attended that great Sacrifice with much devotion and tenderness! Enliven your faith, therefore, and recognize that the same action is performed on the Altar, and that the same Sacrifice is offered not only by the priest, but also by all who attend Mass through union with Christ by Baptism. So, everyone who attends Mass performs, in a certain manner, the office of priests during the celebration of the Mass, in which the merits of the Passion of our Savior are applied to us in a particular manner.

Additionally, it is, necessary to know that the Sacrifice of the Mass has been created by God for four reasons. 1. To enable us to really honor God. 2. To repay the debt we owe Him because of our sins. 3. To thank God for His blessings. 4. To obtain the Divine graces. From this we reach the following meditations which may help us to pray the Mass with great benefit and fruit:

1. By the offering of the Person of Jesus Christ, God and man, to the Eternal Father, we give to God infinite honor; we give Him greater honor than He would receive from the sacrifice of the lives of all men and all angels put together.
2. By the oblation of Jesus Christ in the Mass, we offer to God a complete satisfaction for all the sins of men, and especially for the sins of those who are present at Mass; the same Divine Blood which redeemed the human race on Calvary is applied to their souls. And so, by more satisfaction is paid to God by a single Mass (and by every Mass) than by any other work of penance or expiation. But although the Mass is of infinite value, God *accepts* it only in a finite way, according to the dispositions of the hearts of those who attend the holy Sacrifice, and, therefore, it is useful to attend Mass often and even daily.
3. In the Mass we render to God a perfect thanksgiving for all the blessings that He has given to us.
4. During the Mass we can obtain all the graces that we desire for ourselves and for others. We are unworthy of receiving any grace from God, but Jesus Christ has given us the means of obtaining all graces, if, while we offer Him to God in the Mass, we ask them of the Eternal Father in His Name. This is because, by doing this, Jesus Himself joins in our prayer. If you knew that while you pray to the Lord, the divine Mother, along with all of the saints and angels of Heaven, prayed with you, wouldn't you have

great confidence in your prayers being answered? Realize that when you ask God for any grace during the Mass, Jesus (whose prayers are more efficacious than the prayers of all who are in heaven) prays for you, and offers in your behalf the merits of His Passion.

You will do well, then, to divide the Mass into four parts, as follows:

1. From the Beginning to the Gospel.

Offer the Sacrifice of the Mass to honor God, saying:

"My God, I adore Your Majesty. I wish to honor You as much as You deserve; but what honor can I, a miserable sinner, give to You? I offer You the honor which Jesus gives to You on this Altar."

2. From the Gospel to the Elevation of the Consecrated Host and Chalice.

Offer the Sacrifice in payment for your sins, saying:

"Lord, I detest above every evil all the offences that I have given You: I am sorry for them above all things, and in satisfaction for them I offer Your Son, Who sacrifices Himself for us on this Altar, and through His merits I beg that You would pardon me, and to give me perseverance in holiness until the end of my life."

3. From the Elevation to the Communion

Offer Jesus to the Eternal Father in Thanksgiving for all the graces that He has bestowed upon you, saying:

Lord, I am unable to thank You; I offer You the Blood of Jesus Christ in this Mass, and in all the Masses that are at this moment celebrated throughout the world."

4. From the Communion to the End

Ask with great confidence for all of the graces that you need. Especially ask for: sorrow for your sins, the gift of perseverance, and the gift of a burning love for God. Pray, in a special manner, for all the persons with whom you live; for your relatives; for all poor sinners, especially those who are not sorry for their sins and so, are in danger of hell; and for the souls in purgatory. I do not find it amiss if you pray vocal prayers in your heart during Mass^{1*}, but I desire that you should not fail at the same time to fulfil the four duties to God that I have pointed out to you; namely, honor, expiation, thanksgiving, and prayer. I desire you to hear as many Masses as possible. Every Mass heard in this manner will obtain for you a treasure of merits.

^{1*} The Church recommends that, in general, we pray the prayers of the Mass, and by doing offer Jesus to Our Father and ourselves united with Him. However, this is only general rule. Different personalities, or different circumstances might make it easier to pray the Mass by saying other prayers (e.g., if we cannot hear, or we're sick, or have infants) so long as the goal of the Mass is met: union with Jesus, and offering Him to the Father through the Sacrifice of the Mass and the human priest. This is not ignoring the Mass to do private prayer; this is praying the Mass in another way.

How to Prepare for Holy Communion

Through the words of Consecration said by the Catholic priest, the bread and wine are transformed into the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ. This is not a mere symbol, but a Person, Who deserve my adoration and love, because He is true God. The One Who is hidden under the appearances of ordinary bread and wine is my Savior, Who deserves my love. Therefore, to receive Communion is first of all a public declaration that I am Catholic who believes and practices what the Faith of the Catholic Church, and secondly requires carefully preparation, because I am welcoming my Jesus into my life and heart. *“Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of profaning the body and blood of the Lord. Let a man examine himself, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment upon himself. That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died.”* (1 Cor. 11:27-30)

Effects of Worthy Communion

There are four great effects of receiving Holy Communion worthily, that is, with preparation, love, and attention. These are, first, the union of the soul with Christ by love; second, an increase of sanctifying grace, that is, an increase of holiness; third, the forgiveness of venial sins, as well as help against mortal sins; and fourth, a pledge of Resurrection and the glory of Heaven.

Preparation is both *negative*, that is, avoiding certain things, and *positive*, that is, doing certain things. We will look at both.

Things to Avoid

1) Be free of all mortal sin:

A mortal sin is a sin that is about something serious (the kind of thing that would break a friendship), that I know is serious, and that I do on purpose, anyway. If I did not know it was serious, or did not do it on purpose, or if it is not serious, then it is not a mortal sin. A mortal sin destroys my friendship with God. Since I must be in union with God before I can receive Communion, to receive in mortal sin is first of all a lie, and second, an additional grave offense to God, a second mortal sin, since it pretends that I am His friend when I have deliberately chosen something else instead of Him. I must go to Confession before I receive Communion if I have committed a mortal sin.

2) Fast for one hour before receiving Holy Communion:

*This means taking no food or drink except water or medicine. This means no candy, gum, or drinks except water, **unless** they are necessary for health. For example, a diabetic or someone who is pregnant may need to eat or drink something to keep their blood sugar under control. The point is to have a little hunger for food, to make a deliberate choice of God before my stomach. The point is not to hurt myself.*

3) Do not receive because of

- a) **Vain glory** (trying to impress people/showing others how holy I am)
- b) **Routine** (Thoughtlessly, without preparation, simply because “this is what happens at Mass”)

or

- c) **Human respect** (fear that others will think less of me if I *don't* receive Communion)

Things to Do

1) Have Faith in the Real Presence:

St. Paul says, “For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment upon himself.” (1 Cor. 11:29) The point of receiving Communion is that it is truly union with Jesus Christ, our God and Savior. This is what St. Cyril of Alexandria says, “All who receive the sacred flesh of Christ are united with him as members of his body.” If I do not recognize that Jesus is truly before me, I will not understand what I am receiving, be able to prepare well to welcome Him, nor will I give Him the adoration that He deserves as God.

2) Pray before Mass, give thanks to God after Mass:

To prepare well, I must spend at least some time getting ready to welcome Jesus. This means quieting my mind, opening my heart, and recognizing my God in a loving way as He comes to me. There are many traditional prayers that can be said (see page 7 and following for some suggested prayers before and after Mass that you can choose from if you wish). Praying before Mass will help clear my mind of distractions during Mass as well. Thanking God for His gift after Mass will help keep me from receiving thoughtlessly and out of mere routine. The great saints would pray for a worthy Communion even the night before they went to Mass. St. Alphonsus Ligouri recommends spending fifteen minutes following Mass thanking God and asking for His help for the day and week to come. Even if that is not possible, we can surely spend a few minutes in His Presence after Mass, recognizing Who we have received, rejoicing that He is there, and seeking His graces and blessings.

3) Approach Jesus in Holy Communion with the intention of pleasing God, being more closely united to Him by charity, and to have recourse to this Divine Remedy for my sins and defects.



Suggested Prayers Before Holy Communion

An Act of Offering before Mass:

ETERNAL Father, I offer You the Sacrifice wherein Your dear Son, Jesus, offered Himself upon the Cross and which He now renews upon this altar:

To adore You and to render to You that honor which is Your due, acknowledging Your supreme dominion over all things and their absolute dependence on You, for You are our first beginning and our last end;

To give You thanks for countless benefits received;

To appease Your Justice, provoked to anger by so many sins, and to offer You Worthy satisfaction for the same;

And finally, to implore Your Grace and Mercy for myself, for all those who are in tribulation and distress, for all poor sinners, for the whole world and for the blessed souls in purgatory. Amen.

For Sinners:

O GOD, in Whose sight every soul may well fear and every conscience tremble, be gracious to every cry of sorrow and heal the wounds of sins in all. Even as none of us is free from fault, so may none be a stranger to Your Mercy. Amen.

For the Church:

ALMIGHTY, Eternal God, by ever giving strength to our weakness, You enable the Church to flourish even amidst its trials, so that when it appears to men to be utterly cast down, then rather does it gloriously prevail. While, then, it accepts affliction as a proving of its faith, let it persevere, by Your grace, in triumphant loyalty. Amen.

In Preparation for Receiving Communion

Prayer of St. Thomas Aquinas

ALMIGHTY and everlasting God, behold, I come to the Sacrament of Your only-begotten Son, our Lord Jesus Christ: I come as one infirm to the physician of life, as one unclean to the fountain of mercy, as one blind to the light of everlasting brightness, as one poor and needy to the Lord of heaven and earth. Therefore, I implore the abundance of Your measureless bounty that You wouldst vouchsafe to heal my infirmity, wash my uncleanness, enlighten my blindness, enrich my poverty and clothe my nakedness, that I may receive the Bread of Angels, the King of kings, the Lord of lords, with such reverence and humility, with such sorrow and devotion, with such purity and faith, with such purpose and intention as may be profitable to my soul's salvation.

Grant unto me, I pray, the grace of receiving not only the Sacrament of our Lord's Body and Blood, but also the grace and power of the Sacrament. O most gracious God, grant me so to receive the Body of Your only-begotten Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, which He took from the Virgin Mary, as to merit to be incorporated into His mystical Body, and to be numbered amongst His members. O most loving Father, give me grace to behold forever Your beloved Son with His face at last unveiled, whom I now purpose to receive under the sacramental veil here below. Amen.

Prayer of St. Ambrose

LORD Jesus Christ, I approach Your banquet table in fear and trembling, for I am a sinner, and dare not rely on my own worth, but only on Your goodness and mercy. I am defiled by my many sins in body and soul, and by my unguarded Thoughts and words. Gracious God of majesty and awe, I seek Your protection, I look for Your healing. Poor troubled sinner that I am, I appeal to You, the fountain of all mercy. I cannot bear Your judgment, but I trust in Your salvation. Lord, I show my wounds to You and uncover my shame before You. I know my sins are many and great, and they fill me with fear, but I hope in Your mercies, for they cannot be numbered.

Lord Jesus Christ, Eternal King, God and man, crucified for mankind, look upon me with mercy and hear my prayer, for I trust in You. Have mercy on me, full of sorrow and sin, for the depth of Your compassion never ends.

Praise to Your saving sacrifice, offered on the wood of the Cross for me and for all mankind. Praise to the noble and Precious Blood, flowing from the wounds of my crucified Lord Jesus Christ and washing away the sins of the whole world.

Remember, Lord, Your creature, whom You have redeemed with Your Blood; I repent my sins, and I long to put right what I have done. Merciful Father, take away all my offences and sins; purify me in body and soul, and make me Worthy to taste the Holy of Holies. May Your Body and Blood, which I intend to receive, although I am unworthy, be for me the remission of my sins, the washing away of my guilt, the end of my evil Thoughts, and the rebirth of my better instincts. May it incite me to do the works pleasing to You, and a firm defense of body and soul against the wiles of my enemies. Amen.

Prayer to the Blessed Virgin Mary

O MOST Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of gentleness and mercy, I, a miserable and unworthy sinner, fly to your protection with every sentiment of humility and love; and I implore of your loving kindness that You wouldst vouchsafe graciously to be near me, and all who throughout the whole Church are to receive the Body and Blood of your Son this day, even as you were near your sweetest Son as He hung bleeding on the Cross. Aided by your gracious help, may we worthily approach this august Sacrament. Amen.

The Forming of One's Intention

Joy with peace,
amendment of life,
space for true repentance,
the grace and comfort of the Holy Ghost,
perseverance in good works,
a contrite and humble heart,
and a happy consummation of my life,
grant unto me,
O Almighty and merciful Lord.
Amen.

A Prayer of St. Basil the Great

O Lord, I know that I am unworthy to receive Your Holy Body and Precious Blood; I know that I am guilty, and that I eat and drink condemnation to myself, not discerning the Body and Blood of Christ my God. But trusting in Your loving-kindness I come unto You who has said: He that eats my Body and drinks my Blood shall dwell in me and I in him. Therefore, O Lord, have compassion on me and make not an example of me, Your sinful servant. But do unto me according to Your great mercy, and grant that these Holy Gifts may be for me unto the healing, purification, enlightenment, protection, salvation and sanctification of my soul and body, and to the expulsion of every evil imagination, sinful deed or work of the Devil. May they move me to reliance on You and to love You always, to amend and keep firm my life; and be ever in me to the increase of virtue, to the keeping of Your Commandments, to the communion of the Holy Spirit, and as a good defense before Your dread Judgment Seat, and for Life Eternal. Amen.

A Prayer of St. John of Damascus

O Lord and Master Jesus Christ, our God, who alone hath power to forgive the sins of men, do You, O Good One who loves mankind, forgive all the sins that I have committed in knowledge or in ignorance, and make me Worthy to receive without condemnation Your divine, glorious, immaculate and life-giving Mysteries; not unto punishment or unto increase of sin; but unto purification, and sanctification and a promise of Your Kingdom and the Life to come; as a protection and a help to overthrow the adversaries, and to blot out my many sins. For You are a God of mercy and compassion and love toward mankind, and unto You we ascribe glory, together with the Father and the Holy Spirit: now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

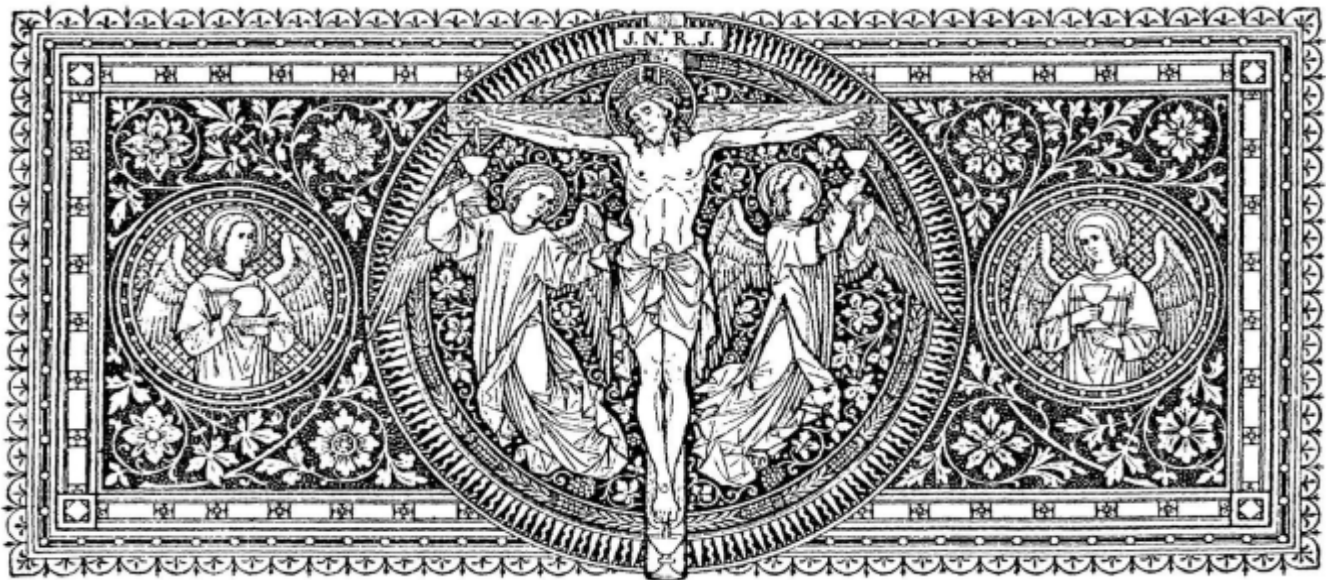
A Prayer of St. John Chrysostom

I believe, O Lord, and I confess that You are truly the Christ, the Son of the living God, who came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief. And I believe that this is truly Your own precious Body, and that this is truly Your own precious Blood.

Wherefore I pray You, have mercy upon me and forgive my transgressions both voluntary and involuntary, of word and of deed, of knowledge and of ignorance; and make me Worthy to partake without condemnation of Your immaculate Mysteries, unto remission of my sins and unto life everlasting. Amen.

Of Your Mystic Supper, O Son of God, accept me today as a communicant: for I will not speak of Your Mystery to Your enemies, neither will I give You a kiss as did Judas; but like the thief will I confess You: Remember me, O Lord, in Your Kingdom.

Not unto judgment nor unto condemnation be my partaking of Your Holy Mysteries, O Lord, but unto the healing of soul and body. Amen.



Suggested Prayers of Thanksgiving after Holy Communion

Prayer of St. Thomas Aquinas

I GIVE thanks to You, O Lord, most holy, Father almighty, eternal God, that You hast vouchsafed, for no merit of mine own, but out of Your pure mercy, to appease the hunger of my soul with the precious Body and Blood of Your Son, Our Lord Jesus Christ. Humbly I implore You, let not this holy Communion be to me an increase of guilt unto my punishment, but an availing plea unto pardon and salvation. Let it be to me the armor of faith and the shield of good will. May it root out from my heart all vice; may it utterly subdue my evil passions and all my unruly desires. May it perfect me in charity and patience; in humility and obedience; and in all other virtues. May it be my sure defense against the snares laid for me by my enemies, visible and invisible. May it restrain and quiet all my evil impulses, and make me ever cleave to You Who art the one true God. May I owe to it a happy ending of my life.

And do You, O heavenly Father, vouchsafe one day to call me, a sinner, to that ineffable banquet, where You, together with Your Son and the Holy Ghost, are to Your saints true and unfailing light,

fullness of content, joy for evermore, gladness without alloy, consummate and everlasting happiness. Through the same Christ our Lord. Amen.

Prayer of St. Bonaventure

PIERCE, O most Sweet Lord Jesus, my in-most soul with the most joyous and healthful wound of Your love, with true, serene, and most holy apostolic charity, that my soul may ever languish and melt with love and longing for You, that in longing for You, that it may yearn for You and faint for Your courts, and long to be dissolved and to be with You.

Grant that my soul may hunger after You, the bread of angels, the refreshment of holy souls, our daily and super-substantial bread, having all sweetness and savor and every delight of taste; let my heart ever hunger after and feed upon You, upon Whom the angels desire to look, and may my in-most soul be filled with the sweetness of Your savor; may it ever thirst after You, the fountain of life, the fountain of wisdom and knowledge, the fountain of eternal light, the torrent of pleasure, the richness of the house of God.

May it ever compass You, seek You, find You, run to You, attain You, meditate upon You, speak of You, and do all things to the praise and glory of Your Name, with humility and discretion, with love and delight, with ease and affection, and with perseverance unto the end.

May You alone be ever my hope, my entire assurance, my riches, my delight, my pleasure, my joy, my rest and tranquility, my peace, my sweetness, my fragrance, my sweet savor, my food, my refreshment, my refuge, my help, my wisdom, my portion, my possession and my treasure, in Whom may my mind and my heart be fixed and firmly rooted immovably henceforth and forever. Amen.

Prayer to Our Lord

I BESEECH You, O most meek and loving Jesus, that this immortal Host may return Your thanks on my behalf, may reconcile and restore me to You. May it procure pardon for me, a sinner, and lead me to everlasting life. Amen.

HOW SWEET and lovely is this Bread of heaven which You hast given us! How wonderful is the rest, how full the peace which they experience who receive You after a sincere and sorrowful confession of their sins! For this, O my Jesus, be You praised a Thousand times! In the matter of sin I have been most unfortunate; but now not only do I enjoy true comfort of soul, but I also believe that I have had a foretaste of the peace of heaven. How true it is, O Lord, that our soul was made for You, and can enjoy true peace only when it rests in You! From the bottom of my heart, therefore, do I thank You and I firmly resolve ever to fly sin and its occasions and to take up my lasting dwelling in Your divine Heart, from which I hope the grace and help to love You until death. Amen.

Anima Christi (Soul of Christ)

Soul of Christ, sanctify me.
Body of Christ, save me.
Blood of Christ, inebriate me.
Water from the side of Christ, wash me.
Passion of Christ, strengthen me.
O good Jesus, hear me.
Within Your Wounds hide me.
Suffer me not to be separated from You.
From the malignant enemy, defend me.
In the hour of my death, call me,
And bid me come to You.
That with Your saints, I may praise You.
Forever and ever.
Amen.

Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, may the whole world burn with love for You! (x3)

Prayer to the Blessed Virgin

O MOST holy, O most benign, O noble and glorious Virgin Mary, who was worthy to bear in your sacred womb the Creator of all, and at your virginal breast to nourish Him Whose true, real, and most holy Body and Blood I, an unworthy sinner, have just now dared to receive: vouchsafe, I humbly beseech you, to intercede with Him for me a sinner; that whatsoever, by ignorance or neglect, by accident or irreverence, I have left undone, or have done amiss, in this unspeakably holy Sacrament, may be pardoned through your

prayers to the same our Lord Jesus Christ, Your SON, Who with the FATHER and the HOLY GHOST lives and reigns forever and ever.
Amen.

Prayer of St. Padre Pio

STAY with me, Lord, for it is necessary to have You present so that I do not forget You.

You know how easily I abandon You.

Stay with me, Lord, because I am weak, and I need Your strength, so that I may not fall so often.

Stay with me, Lord, for You art my life, and without You, I am without fervor.

Stay with me, Lord, for You art my light, and without You, I am in darkness.

Stay with me, Lord, to show me Your Will.

Stay with me, Lord, so that I hear Your Voice and follow You.

Stay with me, Lord, for I desire to love You very much, and always be in Your company.

Stay with me, Lord, if You wish me to be faithful to You.

Stay with me, Lord, for as poor as my soul is, I want it to be a place of consolation for You, a nest of love.

Amen.

Prayer before a Crucifix

BEHOLD, O Kind and most sweet Jesus, before Your Face I humbly kneel, and with the most fervent desire of soul, I pray and beseech You to impress upon my heart lively sentiments of faith, hope and charity, true contrition for my sins and a firm purpose of amendment.

With deep affection and grief of soul, I ponder within myself, mentally contemplating Your five Wounds, having before my eyes the words which David the Prophet spoke concerning You: "They have pierced my hands and my feet, they have numbered all my bones." Amen.

Conclude with Our Father, Hail Mary & Glory Be for the Holy Father's intentions.

On Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament

From *Sacramentum Caritatis* of Pope Benedict XVI

In the Eucharist, the Son of God comes to meet us and desires to become one with us; eucharistic adoration is simply the natural consequence of the eucharistic celebration, which is itself the Church's supreme act of adoration. (192) Receiving the Eucharist means adoring him whom we receive. Only in this way do we become one with him, and are given, as it were, a foretaste of the beauty of the heavenly liturgy. The act of adoration outside Mass prolongs and intensifies all that takes place during the liturgical celebration itself. Indeed, "only in adoration can a profound and genuine reception mature."

I heartily recommend to the Church's pastors and to the People of God the practice of eucharistic adoration, both individually and in community. Great benefit would ensue from a suitable catechesis explaining the importance of this act of worship, which enables the faithful to experience the liturgical celebration more fully and more fruitfully. I also recommend that, in their catechetical training, and especially in their preparation for First Holy Communion, children be taught the meaning and the beauty of spending time with Jesus, and helped to cultivate a sense of awe before his presence in the Eucharist.

The personal relationship which the individual believer establishes with Jesus present in the Eucharist constantly points beyond itself to the whole communion of the Church... For this reason, besides encouraging individual believers to make time for personal prayer before the Sacrament of the Altar, I feel obliged to urge parishes and other church groups to set aside times for collective adoration. Naturally, already existing forms of eucharistic piety retain their full value. I am thinking, for example, of processions with the Blessed Sacrament, especially ... on the Solemnity of *Corpus Christi*, the Forty Hours devotion... and other similar initiatives.

Christianity's new worship includes and transfigures every aspect of life: "Whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God" (*1 Cor* 10:31). Christians, in all their actions, are called to offer true worship to God. Here the intrinsically eucharistic nature of Christian life begins to take shape. The Eucharist, since it embraces the concrete, everyday existence of the believer, makes possible, day by day, the progressive transfiguration of all those called by grace to reflect the image of the Son of God (cf. *Rom* 8:29ff.). There is nothing authentically human – our Thoughts and affections, our words and deeds – that does not find in the sacrament of the Eucharist the form it needs to be lived to the full. Here we can see the full human import of the radical newness brought by Christ in the Eucharist: the worship of God in our lives cannot be relegated to something private and individual, but tends by its nature to permeate every aspect of our existence. Worship pleasing to God thus becomes a new way of living our whole life, each particular moment of which is lifted up, since it is lived as part of a relationship with Christ and as an offering to God. The glory of God is the living man (cf. *1 Cor* 10:31). And the life of man is the vision of God.

Meditations for Visiting the Blessed Sacrament

St. Alphonsus Ligouri

As in all of the following visits to the Most Blessed Sacrament (page 19) *spiritual Communion* is recommended, it will be well to explain what it is, and the great advantages which result from its practice.

A spiritual Communion, according to St. Thomas, [P. 3, q. 80, a. 1] consists in an ardent desire to receive Jesus in the Most Holy Sacrament, and in lovingly embracing Him as if we had actually received Him. How pleasing these spiritual Communions are to God, and the many graces which He bestows through their means, was manifested by our Lord Himself to Sister Paula Maresca, the foundress of the convent of St. Catherine of Sienna in Naples, when (as it is related in her life) He showed her two precious vessels, the one of gold, the other of silver. He then told her that in the gold vessel He preserved her sacramental Communions, and in the silver one her spiritual Communions. He also told Blessed Jane of the Cross that each time that she communicated spiritually she received a grace of the same kind as the one that she received when she really communicated. Above all, it will suffice for us to know that the holy Council of Trent [Sess. xiii. c. 8] greatly praises spiritual Communions and encourages the faithful to practice them. Hence all devout souls are accustomed often to practice this holy exercise of spiritual Communion. Blessed Agatha of the Cross did so two hundred times a day. And Father Peter Faber, the first companion of St. Ignatius, used to say that it was of the highest utility to make spiritual Communions, in order to receive the sacramental Communion well.

All those who desire to advance in the love of Jesus Christ are exhorted to make a spiritual Communion at least once in every visit that they pay to the Most Blessed Sacrament, and at every Mass that they hear; and it would even be better on these occasions to repeat the Communions three times, that is to say, at the beginning, in the middle, and at the end. This devotion is far more profitable than some suppose, and at the same time nothing can be easier to practice. The above-named Blessed Jane of the Cross used to say, that a spiritual Communion can be made without anyone remarking it, without being fasting, without the permission of our director, and that we can make it at any time we please: an act of love does all. [An Act of Spiritual Communion, according to any pious formula, is enriched with a partial Indulgence.]

Suggested Prayers before Spiritual Communion and Visits to Jesus, the Blessed Sacrament

My Lord Jesus Christ, Who, for the love which You bear to men, remaining night and day in this Sacrament full of compassion and of love, awaiting, calling, and welcoming all who come to visit You: I believe that You are present in the Sacrament of the Altar: I adore You from the abyss of my nothingness, and I thank You for all the graces which You hast bestowed upon me, and in particular for having given me Yourself in this Sacrament,

for having given me Your most holy Mother Mary for my advocate, and for having called me to visit You in this church.

I now salute Your most loving Heart; and this for three reasons:

1. In thanksgiving for this great gift;
2. To make amends to You for all the outrages which You receive in this Sacrament from all Your enemies;
3. I intend by this visit to adore You in all the places on earth in which You are present in this Sacrament, and in which You are the least revered and the most abandoned.

My Jesus, I love You with my whole heart. I grieve for having hitherto so many times offended Thine infinite goodness. I purpose by Your grace never more to offend You for the time to come; and now, miserable and unworthy Though I be, I consecrate myself to You without reserve; I give You and renounce my entire will, my affections, my desires, and all that I possess. From henceforward do You dispose of me and of all that I have as You please. All that I ask of You and desire is Your holy love, final perseverance, and the perfect accomplishment of Your will.

I recommend to You the Souls in Purgatory; but especially those who had the greatest devotion to the Most Blessed Sacrament and to the Most Blessed Virgin Mary. I also recommend to You all poor sinners.

In fine, my dear Savior, I unite all my affections with the affections of Your most loving Heart; and I offer them, thus united, to Your Eternal Father, and beseech Him in Your name to vouchsafe, for Your love, to accept and grant them.

An Act of Spiritual Communion

My Jesus, I believe that You art truly present in the Most Blessed Sacrament. I love You above all things, and I desire to possess You within my soul. Since I am unable now to receive You sacramentally, come at least spiritually into my heart. I embrace You as being already there and unite myself wholly to You; never permit me to be separated from You.

Shorter Acts of Spiritual Communion

I believe that You, O Jesus, art in the Most Holy Sacrament! I love You and desire You!

Come into my heart. I embrace You; oh, never leave me!

"May the burning and most sweet power of Your love, O Lord Jesus Christ, I beseech You, absorb my mind, that I may die through love of Your love, Who were graciously pleased to die through love of my love."— St. Francis of Assisi.

"O love not loved! O love not known!"— St. M. Magdalene of Pazzi.

"O my spouse, when wilt You take me to Yourself?" – St. Peter of Alcantara.

Jesus, my good, my sweetest love, Strike and inflame this heart of mine, Make it all fire for love of You! Hail to the love of Jesus, our life, and our all! to Mary, our hope! Amen.

After the spiritual Communion, make a visit to some image of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Visit to the Blessed Virgin, and finish by the following prayer, for the most powerful patronage of Mary:

Most holy Immaculate Virgin and my Mother Mary, to you who art the Mother of my Lord, the Queen of the world, the advocate, the hope, the refuge of sinners. I have recourse today, I, who am the most miserable of all. I render you my most humble homages, O Great Queen, and I thank you for all the graces you have conferred on me until now, particularly for having delivered me from Hell, which I have so often deserved. I love you, O most amiable Lady; and for the love which I bear you, I promise to serve you always, and to do all in my power to make others love you also. I place in you all my hopes; I confide my salvation to your care. Accept me for your servant, and receive me under your mantle, O Mother of mercy. And since you are so powerful with God, deliver me from all temptations, or rather obtain me the strength to triumph over them until death. Of you I ask a perfect love for Jesus Christ. From you I hope to die a good death. O my Mother, by the love which you bear for God, I beseech you to help me at all times, but especially at the last moment of my life. Leave me not, I beseech you, until you see me safe in Heaven, blessing you, and singing your mercies for all eternity. Amen. So I hope. So may it be.



FIRST VISIT To the Blessed Sacrament

1. Say the preliminary prayer, MY LORD JESUS CHRIST, etc.
2. Then pray...

Behold the source of every good, Jesus in the Most Holy Sacrament, Who says, *If any man thirst, let him come to Me.* [John, vii. 37] Oh, what torrents of grace have the Saints drawn from the fountain of the Most Blessed Sacrament! For there Jesus dispenses all the merits of His Passion, as it was foretold by the Prophet: *You shall draw waters with joy out of the Savior's fountains.* [Isa. xii. 3]

The Countess of Feria, that illustrious disciple of the Venerable Father John d'Avila, afterwards a poor Clare, and surnamed the spouse of the Most Blessed Sacrament from her long and frequent visits to it, on being asked how she employed the many hours thus passed in the Presence of the Holy of holies, answered: "I could remain there for all eternity. And is not there present the very essence of God, Who will be the food of the blessed? My Good God! I am asked what I do in His Presence? Why am I not rather asked, what is not done there? We love, we ask, we praise, we give thanks. We ask, what does a poor man do in the presence of one who is rich? What does a sick man do in the presence of his physician? What does a man do who is parched with thirst in the presence of a clear fountain? What is the occupation of one who is starving, and is placed before a splendid table?"

O my most amiable, most sweet, most beloved Jesus, my life, my hope, my treasure, the only love of my soul; oh, what has it cost You to remain thus with us in this Sacrament! You had to die, that You might thus dwell amongst us on our Altars; and then, how many insults hast You not had to endure in this Sacrament, in order to aid us by Your Presence! Your love, and the desire which You hast to be loved by us, have conquered all. Come then, O Lord! come and take possession of my heart; close its doors forever, that henceforward no creature may enter there, to divide the love which is due to You, and which it is my ardent desire to bestow all on You. Do You alone, my dear Redeemer, rule me; do You alone possess my whole being; and if ever I do not obey You perfectly, chastise me with rigor, that thenceforward I may be more watchful to please You as You wiliest. Grant that I may no longer seek for any other pleasure than that of giving You pleasure; that all my pleasure may be to visit You often on Your Altar; to entertain myself with You, and to receive You in Holy Communion.

Let all who will, seek other treasures; the only treasure that I love, the only one that I desire, is that of Your love; for this only will I ask at the foot of the Altar. Do You make me forget myself, that thus I may only remember Your goodness. O blessed Seraphim, I envy you, not for your glory, but for the love which you bear for your and my God; oh, do You teach me what I must do to love Him, and to please Him.

Pious prayer. My Jesus, I will love You only; You only do I desire to please.

3. Make a SPIRITUAL COMMUNION and visit the ever-blessed Mary, Mother of God, before her image, praying the prayer for her patronage.

SECOND VISIT To the Blessed Sacrament

1. Say the preliminary prayer, MY LORD JESUS CHRIST, etc.
2. Then pray...

The devout Father Nieremberg says, that bread being a food which is consumed by eating, and which keeps when preserved for use, Jesus was pleased to dwell on earth under its species, that He might thus not only be consumed by uniting Himself to the souls of His lovers by means of the Holy Communion, but also that He might be preserved in the tabernacle, and be present with us, and thus remind us of the love which He bears us. St. Paul says: *He emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant*. [Phil. ii. 7] But what must we say when we see Him "taking the form of bread"?

"No tongue would suffice," says St. Peter of Alcantara, "to proclaim the greatness of the love which Jesus bears to every soul that is in a state of grace. In order, therefore, that His absence might not be to them an occasion of forgetting Him, this most sweet Spouse, when He was pleased to quit this life, left as a memorial this Most Blessed Sacrament, in which He Himself remained. He did not wish that between these souls and Himself any other pledge but Himself should remain, whereby to keep alive their remembrance of Him."

Since, then, my Jesus, You art enclosed in this tabernacle to receive the supplications of miserable creatures who come to seek an audience of You, listen this day to the petition addressed to You by the most ungrateful sinner living on earth. I come repentant to Your feet; for I now know the evil which I have committed in giving You displeasure.

My first prayer and desire, then, is, that You wilt be pleased to pardon me all the sins that I have committed against You. Ah, my God, would that I had never offended You!

After this I must tell You my next desire. Now that I have found out Your sovereign goodness, I have become enamored of You; I feel an ardent desire to love You and to please You; but I have not the strength to do this unless You help me. Manifest, O great Lord, Your supreme power, and Your immense goodness to the whole court of Heaven; change me from a great rebel, such as I have hitherto been to You, into a great lover of You. You canst do so, and I know that such is Your will; supply all that is wanting in me, that thus I may be enabled to love You much— at least that I may love You as much as I have offended You.

I love You, my Jesus; I love You above all things; I love You more than my life, my God, my love, my all!

3. Make a SPIRITUAL COMMUNION and visit the ever-blessed Mary, Mother of God, before her image, praying the prayer for her patronage.

THIRD VISIT To the Blessed Sacrament

1. Say the preliminary prayer, MY LORD JESUS CHRIST, etc.
2. Then pray...

And My delights were to be with the children of men. [Prov. viii. 31] Behold our Jesus, Who, not satisfied with dying on earth for our love, is pleased even after His death to dwell with us in the Most Holy Sacrament, declaring that He finds His delights among men. "O men," exclaims St. Teresa, "how can you offend a God Who declares that it is with you that He finds His delights!"

Jesus finds His delights with us; and shall we not find ours with Jesus? And we especially who have had the honor to dwell in His palace? How greatly do those vassals esteem themselves honored to whom the king assigns an abode in his own residence! Behold the palace of the King; it is this house in which we dwell with Jesus Christ. Let us, then, learn to thank Him for it, and to avail ourselves of conversing with Jesus Christ.

Behold me, then, O my Lord and God, before this Altar, on which You dost reside night and day for my sake. You art the source of every good; You art the healer of every ill; You art the treasure of every poor creature. Behold now at Your feet a sinner, who is of all the poorest and most infirm, and who asks Your mercy; have pity upon me!

Now that I see You in this Sacrament, come down from Heaven upon earth only to do me good; I will not be disheartened at the sight of my misery. I praise You, I thank You, I love You; and if You will that I should ask You for an alms, I will ask for this. O listen to me: I desire never more to offend You; and I desire that You should give me light and grace to love You with all my strength. Lord, I love You with my whole soul; I love You with all my affections. Do You grant that I may thus speak with truth; and that I may speak in the same way during life and for all eternity.

Most holy Virgin Mary, my holy patron Saints, ye Angels and all ye blessed Spirits of Paradise, help me to love my most amiable God.

Pious prayer: O Good Shepherd, true bread, Jesus, have mercy on us: do You feed us; do You guard us; do You show us good things in the land of the living!

3. Make a SPIRITUAL COMMUNION and visit the ever-blessed Mary, Mother of God, before her image, praying the prayer for her patronage.



FOURTH VISIT To the Blessed Sacrament

1. Say the preliminary prayer, MY LORD JESUS CHRIST, etc.
2. Then pray...

Her conversation hath no bitterness, nor her company any tediousness. [Wis. viii. 16]
Friends on earth find such pleasure in being together, that they lose entire days in each other's company: with Jesus in the Most Holy Sacrament, those who love Him not, get weary.

After her death, St. Teresa, who was already in Heaven, said to a nun: "Those who are in Heaven and those who are on earth should be one and the same in purity and in love; we enjoying, and you suffering; and that which we do in Heaven with the Divine Essence, you should do on earth with the Most Blessed Sacrament." [Rib. l. 5. c. 4]

Behold, then, our paradise on earth the Most Blessed Sacrament. O immaculate Lamb, sacrificed for us upon the Cross, remember that I am one of those souls that You hast redeemed by so many sufferings, and by Your death. Grant that You mayest be mine, and that I may never lose You, since You have given Yourself to me, and give Yourself every day, sacrificing Yourself for my love on the Altar; and grant that I may be all Thine.

I give myself to You without reserve, that You mayest dispose of me as You please. I give You my will; chain it with the sweet bonds of Your love, that it may forever be the slave of Your most holy will. I wish no longer to live for the satisfaction of my desires, but only to please Your goodness. Destroy in me all that does not please You; grant me the grace never to have any other Thought than to please You, any other desire than that which You desire.

I love You, O my dear Savior, with my whole heart; I love You because You desire that I should love You; I love You because You art indeed Worthy of my love. I grieve that I love You not as much as You deserve. I desire, Lord, to die for Your love; accept my desire and give me Your love. Amen.

Pious prayer: O good pleasure of my God, I sacrifice myself all to You!

3. Make a SPIRITUAL COMMUNION and visit the ever-blessed Mary, Mother of God, before her image, praying the prayer for her patronage.



FIFTH VISIT To the Blessed Sacrament

1. Say the preliminary prayer, MY LORD JESUS CHRIST, etc.
2. Then pray...

The sparrow hath found herself a house, and the dove a nest for herself, where she may lay her young ones! Your Altars, O Lord of hosts, my King and my God. [Ps. lxxxiii. 4] The sparrow, says David, finds a dwelling in houses; turtle-doves in nests: but You, my king and my God, hast made Yourself a nest and found a dwelling on earth on our Altars, that we might find You, and that You might dwell amongst us. Lord, we cannot but say, that You art too much enamored of men; You no longer know what to do to gain their love. But do You, my most amiable Jesus, give us the grace that we also may be passionately enamored of You.

It would indeed be unreasonable were we cold in our love towards a God Who loves us with such affection. Draw us to You by the sweet attractions of Your love; make us understand the endearing claims which You hast on our love. O infinite Majesty and infinite Goodness, You love men so much, You hast done so much that You might be loved by men: how is it, then, that amongst men there are so few who love You?

I will no longer be as I have hitherto been, of the unhappy number of those ungrateful creatures: I am resolved to love You as much as I can, and to love no other than You: You deserve it; You command me with so much earnestness to do so, I am resolved to satisfy You. Grant, O God of my soul, that I may fully satisfy You. I entreat You to grant me this favor by the merits of Your Passion, and I confidently hope for it. Bestow the goods of the earth on those who desire them; I desire and seek the great treasure of Your love alone.

I love You, my Jesus; I love You, infinite Goodness. You art all my riches, my whole satisfaction, my entire love.

Pious prayer: My Jesus, You hast given Your whole self to me; I give my whole self to You!

3. Make a SPIRITUAL COMMUNION and visit the ever-blessed Mary, Mother of God, before her image, praying the prayer for her patronage.



SIXTH VISIT To the Blessed Sacrament

1. Say the preliminary prayer, MY LORD JESUS CHRIST, etc.
2. Then pray...

Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. [Luke, xii. 34] Jesus Christ says, that where a person places his treasure, there also does he keep his affections. Therefore, the Saints, who neither esteem nor love any other treasure than Jesus Christ, center their hearts and all their love in the Most Blessed Sacrament.

My most amiable Jesus, hidden under the sacramental veils, Who for the love which You bear for me remain night and day imprisoned in this tabernacle, draw, I beseech You, my whole heart to You, that I may think of none but You, that I may love and seek and hope for You alone. Do this by the merits of Your Passion, through which I seek and hope for it.

Ah, my sacramental Lord and Divine Lover, how amiable and tender are the inventions of Your love to gain the love of souls! O Eternal Word, You, in becoming Man, were not satisfied with dying for us; You hast also given us this Sacrament as a companion, as food, and as a pledge of Heaven. You reduce Yourself so as to appear amongst us, at one time as an infant in a stable, at another as a poor man in a workshop, then as a criminal on a gibbet, and now as bread on an altar. Tell me, could You invent other means to win our love? O infinite goodness, when shall I really begin to correspond with such refinements of love? Lord, I will only live to love You alone. And of what use is life to me, if I do not spend it wholly in loving and pleasing You, my beloved Redeemer, Who hast poured out Your whole life for me? And what have I to love, if it is not You, Who art all beauty, all condescension, all goodness, all loving, all Worthy of love?

May my soul live only to love You; may the sole remembrance of Your love dissolve my soul with love; may the very names of crib, and Cross, and Sacrament inflame it with the desire to do great things for You, O my Jesus, Who hast indeed done and suffered great things for me!

Pious prayer: Grant, my Lord, that before I die I may do something to offend You!

3. Make a SPIRITUAL COMMUNION and visit the ever-blessed Mary, Mother of God, before her image, praying the prayer for her patronage.



SEVENTH VISIT To the Blessed Sacrament

1. Say the preliminary prayer, MY LORD JESUS CHRIST, etc.
2. Then pray...

Behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world. [Matt. xxviii. 20]
Thus our loving shepherd, Who has given His life for us who are His sheep, would not separate Himself from us by death. Behold Me, He says, beloved sheep; I am always with you; for you I have remained on earth in this Sacrament; here you find Me whenever you please, to help and console you by My Presence: I will not leave you until the end of the world, as long as you are on earth.

The Bridegroom, says St. Peter of Alcantara, wished to leave His Bride company, that she might not remain alone during so long an absence; and therefore, He left this Sacrament, in which He Himself, the best companion He could leave her, remains. My sweetest Lord, my most amiable Savior, I am now visiting You on this Altar; but You return me the visit with far other love when You enter my soul in the Holy Communion. You art then not only Present to me, but You become my food; You unite and give Your whole self to me, so that I can then say with truth, My Jesus, You art now all mine. Since, then, You give Yourself all to me, it is reasonable that I should give myself all to You. I am a worm, and You art God. O God of love! O love of my soul! when shall I find myself all Thine, in deeds, and not only in words?

You canst do this; by the merits of Your Blood increase my confidence, that I may at once obtain this grace of You, that I may find myself all Thine, and in nothing mine own. You graciously hear, O Lord, the prayers of all; hear now the prayers of a soul that indeed desires really to love You. I desire to love You with all my strength, I desire to obey You in all that You will, without self-interest, without consolations, without reward. I wish to serve You through love, only to please You, only to content Your heart, which is so passionately enamored of me. My reward will be to love You. O beloved Son of the eternal Father, take possession of my liberty, of my will, of all that I possess, and of my entire self, and give me Yourself. I love You, I seek after You, I sigh after You; I desire You, I desire You, I desire You!

Pious prayer: My Jesus, make me all Thine Own!

3. Make a SPIRITUAL COMMUNION and visit the ever-blessed Mary, Mother of God, before her image, praying the prayer for her patronage.

