

# Spiritual Communion



A simple service for use when unable to attend  
the celebration of the Holy Eucharist

## Introduction

Scripture says that when Jesus was at his last supper together with his disciples, he broke bread and shared wine with his friends, commanding them to continue doing this “in remembrance of me.” (Luke 22.19) In obedient response, the first Christians “... devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer... They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts.” (Acts 2.42 & 46)

2,000 years later, we continue to meet together in worship; reading scripture, singing praises, offering prayers, and celebrating with thanksgiving, the Sacrament of the Eucharist. This corporate act in which we are fed with spiritual food, and by which we are incorporated into the mystical body of Christ,<sup>1</sup> remains the central act of our common worship.

Rubrics in the Book of Common Prayer require that Holy Communion should be celebrated in cathedrals, churches and colleges at least on Sundays and other holy days when this is possible.<sup>2</sup> And that “...every Parishioner shall communicate at the least three times in the year, of which Easter is to be one.”<sup>3</sup> The current Canons of the Church of England reinforce this expectation: “It is the duty of all who have been confirmed to receive the Holy Communion regularly...”<sup>4</sup>

Many faithful Christians meet together on Sundays and other occasions to celebrate the Lord’s Supper, while for some, such regular worship is not possible. Those who are ill, members of the armed forces on military duty, or those who work in essential services, may be some of the faithful not able to receive Communion very often. There are many Christians throughout the world who are separated geographically from where church services are regularly provided. For all of these, and other Christians who cannot avail themselves easily of attendance at regular Communion Services, special provision is made for making an act of “spiritual communion”, in which they may expect to receive all the benefits of the grace attached to the sacrament the Eucharist. This idea is clearly expressed both in the Book of Common Prayer,<sup>5</sup> and also in the more recent Common Worship resources: “Believers who cannot physically receive the sacrament are to be assured that they are partakers by faith of the body and blood of Christ and of the benefits he conveys to us by them.”<sup>6</sup>

So then, it is for all who are unable to be present at regular celebrations of the Eucharist, that this simple service of Spiritual Communion is offered.

## Spiritual Communion

### Preparation

*Prepare yourself and your surroundings, so that you may undisturbed, quiet, and at peace.*

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.  
Amen.

Almighty God,  
to whom all hearts are open,  
all desires known,  
and from whom no secrets are hidden:  
cleanse the thoughts of our hearts  
by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit,  
that we may perfectly love you,  
and worthily magnify your holy name;  
through Christ our Lord.  
Amen.

*Spend some time examining your conscience, calling to mind thoughts, words and actions you would like to confess. Then use the following or similar words:*

My God, for love of you  
I desire to hate and forsake all sins  
by which I have ever displeased you;  
and I resolve by the help of your grace  
to commit them no more;  
and to avoid all opportunities of sin.  
Help me to do this,  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.  
Amen.

Hear the words of comfort our Saviour Christ says  
to all who truly turn to him:

Come to me, all who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give  
you rest. *Matthew 11.28*

God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that  
whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.  
*John 3.16*

Hear also what Saint Paul says:  
This saying is true, and worthy of full acceptance, that Christ  
Jesus came into the world to save sinners. *1 Timothy 1.15*

Hear also what Saint John says:  
If anyone sins, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ  
the righteous; and he is the propitiation for our sins. *1 John 2.1,2*

### **Collect**

*The Collect for the day may be prayed, or another collect may be  
used, such as:*

Merciful God,  
you have prepared for those who love you  
such good things as pass our understanding:  
pour into our hearts such love toward you  
that we, loving you in all things and above all things,  
may obtain your promises,  
which exceed all that we can desire;  
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,  
who is alive and reigns with you,  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and for ever.  
Amen.

## **The Word of God**

*Read the gospel passage appointed for the day or another passage of scripture, such as:*

Jesus said to them: I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty. John 6.35

The Beatitudes: Matthew 5.1-2

The water of life: John 4.13-14

*Having read the scriptures prayerfully, allow yourself time take in the message of the passage.*

## **An act of Faith, Hope and Love**

*Having pondered the scriptures, make an act of faith with these or other words:*

Lord, I believe in you, help my unbelief.  
Lord, I hope in you, help me to trust more firmly.  
Lord, I love you, help me to love more truly.  
Amen.<sup>7</sup>

## **Prayers of Intercession**

*Offer prayers for the Church, the world, for all in need and for the communion of saints, concluding with these or other words:*

Lord God,  
we ask you to give us your blessing:  
to your Church, holiness,  
to the world, peace,  
to this nation, justice  
and to all people knowledge of your law.

Keep safe our families and friends,  
protect the week,  
heal the sick,  
comfort the dying,  
and bring us all to a joyful resurrection.  
All this we ask through Jesus Christ our Lord.  
Amen.<sup>8</sup>

### **Communion**

*Acknowledging the presence of Jesus in you through the grace of the Holy Spirit, remember with thanksgiving, the many places in the world where the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist is being offered, and the faithful are being fed with the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

*The following or other prayers may be offered:*

In union, O Lord  
with the faithful at every altar of your Church,  
where the Holy Eucharist is now being celebrated,  
I desire to offer you praise and thanksgiving.  
I present to you my soul and body  
with the earnest wish that I may always be united with you.  
And since I cannot now receive you sacramentally,  
I ask you to come spiritually into my heart.  
I unite myself to you,  
and embrace you with all the affections of my soul.  
Let nothing ever separate you from me.  
May I live and die in your love.  
Amen.<sup>9</sup>

### **The Lord's Prayer**

Our Father...

*Offer prayers of thanksgiving, concluding with this or other prayer:*

Father of all,  
we give you thanks and praise,  
that when we were still far off  
you met us in your Son and brought us home.  
Dying and living, he declared your love,  
gave us grace, and opened the gate of glory.  
Keep us firm in the hope you have set before us,  
so we and all your children shall be free,  
and the whole earth live to praise your name;  
through Christ our Lord.  
Amen.<sup>10</sup>

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,  
and the love of God,  
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit,  
be with us all evermore.  
Amen.

*Emmaus House of Prayer  
Northampton, March 2020*

*Unless indicated, all of the texts used above are taken from  
Common Worship: Services and Prayers for the Church  
of England, © The Archbishop's Council 2000.*

## Notes

- 1 Common Worship Main Volume, 298, prayer #4.
- 2 & 3 Book of Common Prayer: Rubrics at the end of the Communion Service, 261-262.
- 4 Canon B 15: Of the receiving of Holy Communion.
- 5 Book of Common Prayer: Rubrics at the end of the Communion Service 325.
- 6 CW: Pastoral Services, 73.
- 7 From: *A Form of Spiritual Communion Compiled by the Bishop of Melanesia*, 1916.
- 8 From An Anglican Prayer Book, 1989 (CPSA)
- 9 From The Armed Forces Prayer Book, 1951 (ECUSA)
- 10 From CW Main Volume, adapted.

## Sources and Bibliography

An Anglican Prayer Book, CPSA, (Cape Town: Collins, 1989)

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