

Christ the King Abbey

(Traditional Benedictines)

(Formerly St Francis of Assisi Chapel)

www.ChristTheKingAbbey.org

Cullman, Alabama

Every Sunday: 6:00 AM and 10:00 AM

Daily: 6:00 AM

Holy Days of Obligation:

6:00 AM - 8:00 AM - 7:00 PM

Our Lady of Lourdes Chapel

Montgomery, Alabama

10:45 AM

Only on first Sunday

of each month

St Pius V Chapel

Birmingham, Alabama

9:30 AM

Every Sunday except

first Sunday of each month

FOURTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

August 17, 2008 – Green

Mass of Sunday; Gl; Cr; Pref. Holy Trinity

Weekly Bulletin #1055

*O Lord, uphold us and
our absent brethren.*

SPIRITUAL COMMUNION

(Part two)

The truth about spiritual Communion should be very consoling for all who truly love our Lord and desire intimate union with Him, but particularly for those faithful who cannot attend Mass and receive Holy Communion as often as they would wish for one reason or another, whether due to a lack of availability of priests, difficulty of travel, financial reasons, sickness, etc. However, care must be taken not to omit Sacramental Communion whenever we have the opportunity. To omit Sacramental Communion under the pretext that spiritual Communion will take its place, is either to show bad will or at least a lack of understanding of the very foundation of union with Jesus in spiritual Communion, namely, the earnest intention to receive Him actually whenever it is possible for one to do so.

We have always endeavored to show the utter simplicity of prayer: that prayer does not, in and of itself, depend so much on this or that formula but rather on the interior disposition and intention of the heart, and that God sees these inward desires of the heart, even though they may not be articulated with the lips. "God is a Spirit and they that adore Him must adore Him in spirit and in truth." These truths must always be reiterated and emphasized for we are apt to forget them and make prayer more complicated and distasteful than it need be. The same goes for spiritual Communion. Nothing can be more simple, more easy, than spiritual Communion. If a prayer formula or a certain "method" is recommended for making a spiritual Communion, we must not feel that we have to use it in order to communicate spiritually. These methods and formulas, and this applies to all other private devotions as well, are meant only as helps and suggestions to dispose the soul for interior piety, not shackle it down or clip the wings of devotion. Spiritual Communion ultimately rests, not on this or that prayer formula, but on the sincere, ardent, though perhaps *unfelt* (without emotion), desire of receiving Jesus Christ in the Holy Sacrament, as St. Thomas says, "and in embracing Him with the same love as if you had actually received Him." We can use any words we wish to express this desire, such as, "Jesus, I love You; come into my soul," "Come, my Jesus," "I need You," etc. But sincere desire, faith, and love, not words, words, words, are what matters most here. In 1923, in his book *Holy Communion*, Bishop De Gibergues, writes: "What must one do in order to communicate spiritually? Is it enough to make acts of faith and love toward Jesus present in the Eucharist? No. We must expressly formulate the desire to communicate, and in order that this desire may be sincere we must be so disposed that we would communicate sacramentally if it were possible. On the other hand, *a simple desire, if deep and sincere, no matter how brief and rapid, is sufficient to constitute spiritual Communion.* Obviously, the longer the desire is prolonged the more fruitful is the Communion. But by a simple impulse of the heart toward Jesus present in the Eucharist we communicate spiritually, we participate in the graces of sacramental Communion."

Even though the briefest words, or even merely the simple, ardent desire, be sufficient to communicate spiritually, we will nevertheless give here the following classical "formula," given by St. Alphonsus, in order to help form the proper disposition and desire within our hearts for spiritual Communion: "My Jesus, I believe that You are truly and really present in the Holy Sacrament. I love You with my whole heart, and because I love You, I am sorry for having offended You. Since I cannot now receive You sacramentally, come at least spiritually into my heart. I embrace You as if You had really come and I give myself entirely to You; do not permit me to be ever separated from You."

Spiritual Communion simply involves what we habitually do, or *should* do, when we actually receive sacramental Communion, namely, receive Our Lord Jesus Christ with fervor and piety, ardently desiring Him to come into our hearts. The trouble is that we so often receive Communion out of mere routine, almost without thinking about it. We often go because everyone else is going, rather than from a sincere, interior desire for union with Jesus. Granted, even from such routine Communions we receive some grace. For the Sacraments work in us, as the theologians say, *ex opere operato*, that is, they work in us by the *work itself*; they bestow grace within our soul to some degree even without our having "fervor" or "attention," as long as there is not the obstacle of a known, un-repent mortal sin. However, the graces which we receive will be in proportion to the fervor, disposition, and desire of our soul: the more perfect and ardent the disposition and desire, the more precious the graces received. *(To be continued)*