

Light of the East

Newsletter of the Society of Saint John Chrysostom
Western Region Edition
Website: www.lightoftheeast.org

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Bringing the faith home in a time of pandemic

By Jim Trageser

As the novel coronavirus began spreading, and public health officials weighed widely divergent models from epidemiologists and infectious disease statisticians, many governors banned religious services as "non-essential."

While all people of faith experienced this separation from their worship community as a deeply felt wound, those Christians whose churches practice the sacraments in the original understood sense are even further removed from their ability to live their faith in the normal sense.

For adherents of the Assyrian Church of the East, and the Eastern Orthodox, Oriental Orthodox, and Catholic (Roman and Eastern) Churches, for whom the Eucharist is the physical presence of the Lord, the spiritual removal from their regular liturgies and loss is incalculable. Televised Divine Liturgy or

Mass is no substitute for receiving the real presence of God.

While we wait for liturgies to resume, sooner in some places than others, and much later for those whose health places them in a high risk group should they contract Covid-19 via the

coronavirus, Church fathers are reminding the faithful that all of our Churches have had teachings, traditions and prayers in place for those faithful unable to attend weekly services for various reasons throughout the ages.

Bishops from all of the above historic apostolic

liturgic sacramental

Churches have used our modern technology to share with the faithful these ways of re-emphasizing the "little Church of the family" - of worshiping at home, not in lieu of communal

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An Orthodox prayer corner in a family home.

Photo by Evangelidis; courtesy Wikimedia Commons

Happenings!

2020 Conference postponed:

Due to the novel coronavirus outbreak, our planned spring conference on "The Spirituality of Icons" has been indefinitely postponed. We are hoping to reschedule it for this fall, but are

waiting for potential host sites to announce their future availability - which depends on the state and county governments' public health guidance. Watch our website for details - we'll post the dates, locations, speakers and ticket prices as soon as they are finalized.

The Society of Saint John Chrysostom

The Society of Saint John Chrysostom is an Ecumenical group of clergy and lay people that promotes Eastern Christianity and Ecumenical Dialogue between the Eastern and Western Churches. It has sponsored the Eastern Churches Journal and the annual Orientale Lumen Conference. It has been in existence since 1997 in the United States and for over 70 years in England.

The Goals of the Society are to:

- Make known the history, worship, spirituality, discipline and theology of Eastern Christendom
- Work and pray that all Christians, particularly the Orthodox and Catholic Churches, will attain the fullness of unity which Jesus Christ desires
- Develop educational programs that present information about the Eastern Churches
- Organize and conduct pilgrimages and conferences that encourage ecumenical dialogue
- Contribute to fundraising activities that support Eastern Christian communities and other programs in need of financial aid.
- Publish books, brochures and other information which help explain Eastern Christianity.
- Encourage and support the study of the writings and liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom.
- Promote scholarships for the study of Eastern Churches and Orthodox Seminaries.

Western Region

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Light of the East

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Message from the Chairman of SSJC-Western Region



A patron saint for all of us in Covid-19 exile

Archpriest George Morelli PhD

Around the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic crisis, a saint whose feast stands out as such a patron was celebrated by the Apostolic Churches – St. Mary of Egypt. Though she is better known among the Eastern Churches (5th Sunday of Great Lent), her feast is also in the Roman Martyrology (April 1).

From her teenage years, St. Mary of Egypt began living a life of sexual lust described as “like a fire of public debauchery.” Her biographer, St. Sophronius, the Patriarch of Jerusalem (634–638 A.D.), points out that she often refused money for her services and was mainly into acts of total sensual lust for pleasure.

At age 29, after 17 years of this lifestyle, she came upon a ship bound for Jerusalem for the Great Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross just as pilgrims were being boarded, many of whom were vigorous young men. She sought passage to continue her life of lust. Once arrived in Jerusalem, she did try to enter the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, several times in fact, for the celebration of the Precious Cross.

However, she was barred from doing so by an unseen force.

Like the figures in the parables of the Prodigal Son and the Publican, like all the penitents throughout the history of the Church, she had a spiritual perception of the meaning of her life thus far and of the true state she was in. St. Sophronius gives us her own words: “The word of salvation gently touched the eyes of my heart and revealed to me that it was my unclean life which barred the entrance to me.”

I pray all of us have such a spiritual perception and awakening of our own missing the mark, “amartia,” our own spiritual illnesses. All of us must

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Morelli

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keep in mind that it is only Christ who is without sin and that all of us fall short, miss the mark in our own way. As St. Paul reminds us in Hebrews (4: 15): "For we have not a high priest, who can not have compassion on our infirmities: but one tempted in all things like as we are, without sin."

Mary of Egypt repented and prayed. As the now-repentant sinner she heard a voice instructing her to cross the Jordan River into the desert and to live there for the rest of her life. After confession and communion, she carried only three loaves of bread to begin her spiritual exile. Like us, during her exile she fought temptation and mourned the separation from Christ's Body and Blood.

Her exile, begun at the age of 29, lasted until she was 76, at which time she was met by the priest-monk Zosimas, made a full confession of her life and received the Eucharist, Christ's Body and Blood once more before she died.

Her spiritual exile was voluntary in as much as she conformed her will to God's will to go into the desert and away from the Divine Liturgy and the Eucharist for many years. While for us the Covid-19 exile from our parishes and the Holy Mysteries is involuntary, we can make a spiritual connection with the exile of Mary of Egypt during this Covid-19 pandemic. While we, too, are cut off from the Holy Mystery of receiving the Body and Blood of Christ, we can remind ourselves that we are still His Body and be spiritually connected.

As St. Paul told the Corinthians: "For as the body is one, and hath many members; and all the members of the body, whereas they are many, yet are one body, so also is Christ. ... Now you are the body of Christ, and members of member." (1Cor 12: 12.27).

As St. Mary, during her desert exile, persevered in repenting and being open to God's gifts she became stronger in her commitment to Christ, so we too can value and cherish even more the spiritual gifts He has given us. Even more we can become stronger in embracing Christ's great commandment: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole mind. This is the greatest and the first commandment. And the second is like to this: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." (Mt 22: 37-39).

The 2nd commandment should be enlivened by love of God (1st Commandment) and begins with those around us, our family, our neighbors, our parishioners, and those we do not know but who cross our paths.

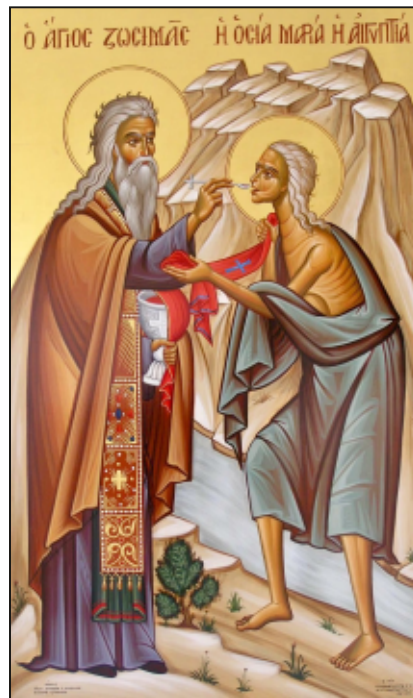
As members of the Society of St. John Chrysostom, we also have a special diaconia: to follow Christ's priestly counsel given at His Priestly Discourse at the Mystical Supper to do all we can to assure the unity of His Apostolic Churches. "That they all may be one, as thou, Father, in me, and I in thee; that they also may be one in us." (Jn 17: 21)

Let us spiritually reach out to Christ by commitment and prayer, and reach out by Christ-like love to all around us. In conclusion I would like to share a short prayer:

Let us pray to the Lord:

We pray for mercy, life, peace, health, salvation, visitation, forgiveness and remission of the sins of the servants of God, those who are under impending threat of the Corona Virus, those who are suffering, those who are recovering and for those who have passed into eternal life from this affliction.

Lord, have mercy.



Parish profiles: Mission Valley, San Diego



Mission San Diego de Alcalá

Pastor: Fr. Peter M. Escalante

Jurisdiction: Diocese of San Diego,
Roman Catholic Church

Mass: See website for schedule

Address: 10818 San Diego Mission Road,
San Diego

Phone: 619-283-7319

Web: www.missionsandiego.org

Photos by Anthony Porrello

Parish profiles: Mission Valley, San Diego



Holy Angels Byzantine Catholic Church

Pastor: Fr. James Bankston

Jurisdiction: Byzantine Catholic Eparchy of Phoenix

Divine Liturgy: 9 a.m. Sunday

Address: 2235 Galahad Road, San Diego

Phone: 858-277-2511

Web: www.holyangelssandiego.com



St. Jacob Melkite Greek-Catholic Church

Pastor: Fr. Shaun Brown

Jurisdiction: Eparchy of Newton

Divine Liturgy: 11 a.m. Sunday

Address: 2235 Galahad Road, San Diego

Phone: 619-333-2772

Web: <https://stjacobmelkite.org>



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services, but as an extension of our faith which too often we let atrophy under the pressure of daily life.

Home prayers for Eastern Orthodox

(Taken from *Acquiring the Mind of Christ*, by Archimandrite Sergius (Bowyer), Abbot of St. Tikhon's Monastery, South Canaan, Pa.)

A Prayer Rule must not and cannot be said in the car. It is certainly good to pray when traveling, but the daily Prayer Rule must be done in front of the icons and the Gospel, preferably with a lit candle, and if possible, the room lights dimmed. It is important to remember that we will never have time for God, but rather must make time for God, for the "Kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force" (Matt. 11:12). The best time to pray is in the morning or in the evening when it is darker. Also, when using a Rule of Prayer, we must be flexible and do what we can do attentively and consistently. Our goal is to maintain the connection with God and cultivate a real relationship, not just fulfill our "rule" of prayer.

The tempo of saying the Jesus Prayer can vary; if we are distracted, then we pray quickly; if we are relaxed, slowly. The Jesus Prayer is not a mantra or vain repetition. The words are a profoundly meaningful confession by which we begin our dialogue with God in fulfillment of the Lord's words: "Whatever you ask in My Name, that I will do" (John 14:13).

We need to read the words of our Lord every

day, at least one chapter. A consecutive reading of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John throughout the year greatly aids us in understanding and doing God's will.

A family prayer rule

The Trisagion Prayers

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. Glory to Thee, O God, glory to Thee.

O Heavenly King, the Comforter, the Spirit of

Truth, Who art everywhere and fillest all things; Treasury of blessings and Giver of Life: Come and abide in us, and cleanse us from every impurity, and save our souls, O Good One.

Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal, have mercy on us. (three times)

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and unto the ages of ages. Amen.

O Most Holy Trinity, have mercy on us. O Lord, cleanse us from our sins. O Master, pardon our iniquities. O Holy One, visit and heal our infirmities for

Thy name's sake.

Lord, have mercy. (three times)

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and unto the ages of ages. Amen.

Our Father, Who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our



Taper candles for sale in the Christian Quarter in Old City of Jerusalem.

Photo by Deror avi, courtesy Wikimedia Commons

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daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.

Lord, have mercy. (three times)

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and unto the ages of ages. Amen.

Come let us worship God our King. Come let us worship and fall down before Christ our King and God. Come let us worship and fall down before Christ Himself, our King and our God.

Psalm 50 (if desired)

Have mercy on me, O God, according to Thy great mercy; and according to the multitude of Thy compassions blot out my transgression. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I know mine iniquity, and my sin is ever before me. Against Thee only have I sinned and done this evil before Thee, that Thou mightest be justified in Thy words, and prevail when Thou art judged. For behold, I was conceived in iniquities, and in sins did my mother bear me. For behold, Thou hast loved truth; the hidden and secret things of Thy wisdom hast Thou made manifest unto me. Thou shalt sprinkle me with hyssop, and I shall be made clean; Thou shalt wash me, and I shall be made whiter than snow. Thou shalt make me to hear joy and gladness; the bones that be humbled, they shall rejoice. Turn Thy face away from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away

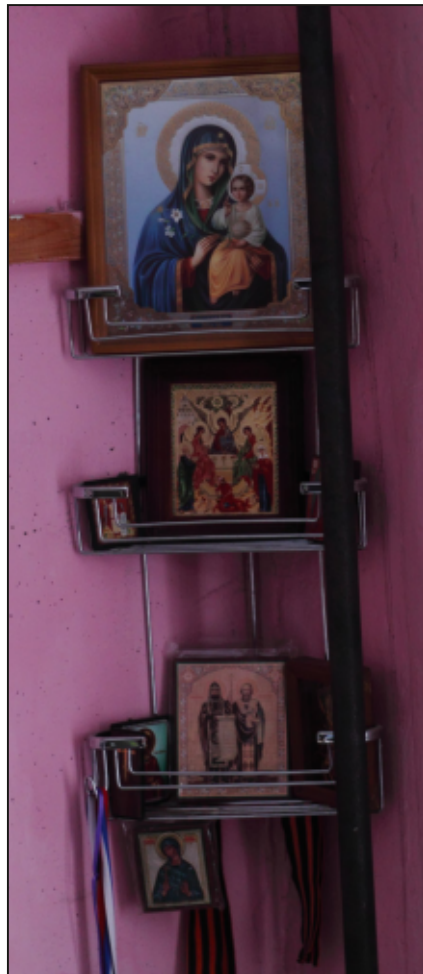
from Thy presence, and take not Thy Holy Spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation, and with Thy governing Spirit establish me. I shall teach transgressors Thy ways, and the ungodly shall turn back unto Thee. Deliver me from blood-guiltiness, O God, Thou God of my salvation; my tongue shall rejoice in Thy righteousness, O Lord, Thou shalt open my lips, and my mouth shall declare Thy praise. For if Thou hadst desired sacrifice, I would have given

it; with whole-burnt offerings Thou shalt not be pleased. A sacrifice unto God is a broken spirit; a heart that is broken and humbled God will not despise. Do good, O Lord, in Thy good pleasure unto Sion, and let the walls of Jerusalem be builded. Then shalt Thou be pleased with a sacrifice of righteousness, with oblation and whole-burnt offerings. Then shall they offer bullocks upon Thine altar.

The Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed

I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things, visible and invisible. And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Only-begotten, begotten of the Father before all ages. Light of Light, True God of True God, begotten, not made, of one essence with the Father, by Whom all things were made; Who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven, and was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary and became man. And He was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate, and suffered,

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A prayer corner in an apartment in St. Petersburg, Russia

Photo by Messir, courtesy Wikimedia Commons

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and was buried, and on the third day He rose again according to the Scriptures, and ascended into heaven, and sits at the right hand of the Father, and He shall come again with glory to judge the living and the dead, Whose kingdom shall have no end. And in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the Giver of Life, Who proceeds from the Father, Who together with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified, Who spoke by the Prophets. In One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church; I acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins; I look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

The Jesus Prayer

(Make five or 10 prostrations [or bows, if we are not able], saying the Jesus Prayer:)

Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me [a sinner].

(We pray for ourselves, for our loved ones, or for those with whom we have ill will. We cross ourselves each time and say the prayer slowly as we bow to the ground).

Prayers for our Family and Loved Ones

Grant rest eternal in blessed repose, O Lord, to the souls of Thy departed servants, the ever-to-be-remembered (their names), and make their memory to be eternal! Memory eternal! (Recite three times.)

O Physician of souls and bodies, with a contrite and humble heart, we ask Thee to bring to an end the physical and spiritual pain and suffering of Thy servants (their names), and as Thou did raise up the daughter of Jairus and

Peter's mother-in-law by Thy divine touch, raise up Thy servants unto renewed strength and good health, and grant them many, blessed years! Many Years! (three times)

Prayers from our Prayer Book

(Here we can say prayers from the Prayer Book, especially Prayers in Preparation for Holy Communion, Prayers of Intercession for Others or Special Intention, etc.)

A Chapter from the Scriptures

(Then we read a chapter from the Gospel, or another book of the Sacred Scripture, perhaps according to the Church calendar, or also a portion of Orthodox spiritual reading.)

Morning Prayer

I thank Thee, O Lord, that Thou hast again shown me the Light of a new day. Grant me to greet this day in peace. At all times, help me to rely upon Thy holy

will. In every hour of this day, help me, teach me, and reveal Thy will to me. Bless, help, and save all those who surround me. Teach me to treat everything that comes to me throughout this day with peace of soul and with firm conviction that Thy will governs all things. In all my deeds and words, sanctify, bless and correct my thoughts and feelings. In unforeseen events, let me not forget that everything is sent by Thee. Teach me to act firmly and wisely without embittering or embarrassing others. O Lord, give me strength to bear the fatigue of the coming day with all it shall bring. Direct my will, teach me to pray, and



A family prayer corner in Belarus

Photo by Olga Sitnik, courtesy Wikimedia Commons

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Thyself, come, grant me
Thy blessing, be with me,
and pray within me.
Amen.

Evening Prayer

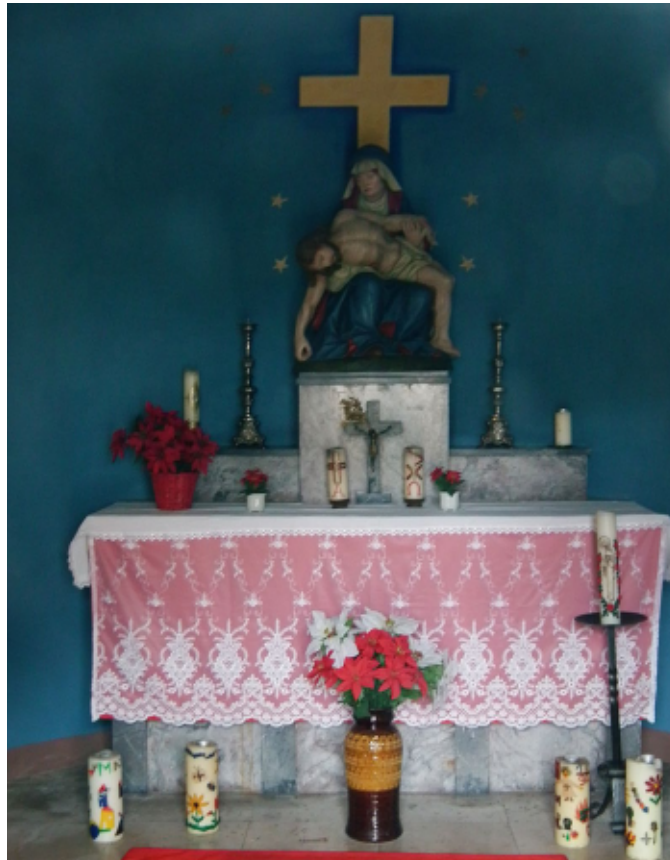
O Eternal God and
King of all creation, Who
hast kept me safe to
attain to this hour, forgive
me all wherein I have
sinned today in deed,
word, and thought.
Cleanse, O Lord, my
transgressions and faults
and make me a Temple
for Thy Holy Spirit.
Vanquish the enemies,
both bodily and bodiless,
that fight against me, and
keep and deliver me from
the vain thoughts and evil
desires which tempt me.
Receive my prayers in Thy great mercy. Shine into
my heart the Light of the Holy Spirit. Grant me to
live according to Thy commandments. Teach me to
do Thy will, for Thou art my God. O Lord, I
thank Thee for all the things that Thou hast
brought me this day and I commend it all into Thy
hands, trusting that through Thy mercy all things
will turn out for the good and for my salvation.
Grant me also, as I go to sleep, rest for my body
and soul, and preserve me from the passions of
the flesh and the dark evil spirits. Amen.

Rite of Forgiveness

(Each member of the family lines up from the
eldest to the youngest, and coming before each
person, asks forgiveness of one another, offering
the Kiss of Peace:)

Forgive me, a sinner. (The other person
responds:) God forgives, and I forgive.

(You might also want to say to each other:



God loves you ... and I
love you.)

Concluding Prayers

It is truly meet to
bless thee, O
Theotokos, ever-blessed
and most pure and the
Mother of our God.
More honorable than
the Cherubim and more
glorious beyond
compare than the
Seraphim; without
corruption thou gavest
birth to God the Word:
True Theotokos, we
magnify thee!

Glory to the Father,
and to the Son, and to
the Holy Spirit, now
and ever and unto the
ages of ages. Amen.

Lord, have mercy. (three times)

Through the prayers of our holy Fathers, O
Lord Jesus Christ our God, have mercy upon us
and save us. Amen.

Through the prayers of Thy most pure Mother,
my holy Guardian Angel, my patron saint (name),
and of all Thy Saints, have mercy on us and upon
Thy world.

O Lord, into Thy hands I commit my spirit.
Amen.

A Spiritual Connection to the Eucharist for Catholics

The Catholic Church encourages the faithful to
make frequent, even daily, Communion. Today,
the normal opportunity to receive the Eucharist
comes at daily Mass. (In the past, many parishes,
especially in cities, distributed the Eucharist before

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and after Mass to those who weren't able to attend the whole Mass.) When we cannot make it to daily Mass, however, we can still make an Act of Spiritual Communion. This involves expressing our faith in Christ and in His Presence in the Eucharist, and asking Him to unite Himself with us. The basic elements of an Act of Spiritual Communion are an Act of Faith, an Act of Love, a desire to receive Christ, and an invitation to Him to come into your heart.

An Act of Spiritual Communion

The following texts present one modern and one traditional translation of a popular form of an Act of Spiritual Communion written by St. Alphonsus de Liguori.

You can memorize either version or use one as a guide to offer your own Act of Spiritual Communion.

Modern Translation

My Jesus, I believe that You are present in the Most Holy Sacrament. I love You above all things, and I desire to receive You into my soul. Since I cannot at this moment receive You sacramentally, come at least spiritually into my heart. I embrace You as if You were already there and unite myself wholly to You. Never permit me to be separated from You. Amen.

Traditional Translation

My Jesus, I believe that Thou art present in the Blessed Sacrament. I love Thee above all things, and I desire Thee in my soul. Since I cannot now receive Thee sacramentally, come at least

spiritually into my heart. As though Thou wert already there, I embrace Thee and unite myself wholly to Thee; permit not that I should ever be separated from Thee.

When Should You Make an Act of Spiritual Communion?

The most common occasion for making an Act of Spiritual Communion is when we cannot fulfill our obligation to attend Mass on a Sunday or Holy Day of Obligation, whether because of illness, bad weather, or another reason outside of our control. Many also make an Act of Spiritual Communion when they can and do attend Mass but something

prevents them from receiving sacramental Communion that day, such as a mortal sin that they have not had the opportunity to confess yet.

But our Acts of Spiritual Communion do not need to be confined to those times. In an ideal world, it would be best to

attend Mass and receive Communion every day, but we can't always do so. We can, however, always take 30 seconds or so to make an Act of Spiritual Communion.

We can even do so multiple times a day—even on days when we have been able to receive the Eucharist.

Why do that?

Because each Act of Spiritual Communion that we make increases our desire to receive sacramental Communion and helps us avoid the sins that would make us unable to receive Communion worthily.



A family home altar

Photo by Anupam, courtesy Wikimedia Commons