



## B. Those who Cannot Receive the Eucharist

Q. I am Catholic, but I cannot receive Holy Communion because I'm divorced and remarried outside the Catholic Church. Can I receive the graces of Divine Mercy Sunday?

A. If at present you cannot receive the Sacraments in the Catholic Church because of your marital circumstances, and you are not able to receive Holy Communion on Divine Mercy Sunday, strive to receive Spiritual Communion.

Ask the Lord to be merciful to you and long to receive Him into your heart.

Our Lord said to St. Faustina: "The graces of My mercy are drawn by means of one vessel only, and that is trust. The more a soul trusts, the more it will receive. Souls that trust boundlessly are a great comfort to Me, because I pour all the treasures of My graces into them. I rejoice that they ask for much, because it is My desire to give much, very much" (*Diary*, 1578).

With this in mind, you can participate in the celebration of Divine Mercy Sunday by making a Spiritual Communion, with great trust. God will give you all the graces that He sees that you need because of your great trust.

### Act of Spiritual Communion

My Jesus, I believe that You are present in the Blessed Sacrament.  
 I love You above all things and I desire You in my soul.  
 Since I cannot now receive You sacramentally,  
 come at least spiritually into my heart.  
 As though You were already there,  
 I embrace You and unite myself to You;  
 permit not that I should ever be separated from You.  
 Amen.

Below we provide a beautiful reflection on those who are unable to receive Holy Communion and long for it by Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger (Pope Benedict XVI) in his book *Behold the Pierced One*.

The Incarnation of the Son [of God] creates communion between God and man and thus also makes possible a new communion among human beings. This communion between God and man, which is realized in the Person of Jesus Christ, itself becomes communicable in the Easter mystery, that is, in the Lord's death and Resurrection. The Eucharist is our participation in the Easter mystery and hence it is constitutive of the Church, the Body of Christ. This is why the Eucharist is necessary for salvation.

The Church, which is built upon the sacrament of the Body of Christ, must herself be a body. And she must be a single body, corresponding to Jesus Christ's uniqueness, a uniqueness which is reflected in unity and in the "continuing in" the one, apostolic teaching [cf. Acts 2:42].

If this is how things are, what are we to say of the many Christians who believe and hope in the Lord, who yearn for the gift of his body but cannot receive the sacrament?



People are excluded from sacramental communion in very different ways. First of all there are those who are simply unable to receive the sacrament in time of persecution or as a result of a lack of priests. Then there are those who are excluded from communion on judicial grounds, like the divorced and remarried. The question also touches on the ecumenical problem of the lack of *communio* among separated Christians...

The burden of excommunication is as hard to bear as martyrdom. But it sometimes happens that such an excommunicate person progresses further along the path of patience and humility than if he were able to receive communion.

[St.] Bonaventure developed this idea. He discovered a very modern-sounding objection to the Church's right to exclude people: Excommunication is separation from communion. But Christian communion, of its essence, exists through love; it is a fellowship of love.

And since no one has the right to exclude anyone from love, neither can there be a right to excommunicate anyone. Bonaventure answers by distinguishing three levels of communion; this enables him to hold fast to Church discipline and Church law, while maintaining, as a responsible theologian: "I assert that no one can be, and no one may be, excluded from the communion of love as long as he lives on earth. Excommunication is not such an exclusion" [IV Sent d 18 p 2 a un q 1 contr 1].

Such reflections, which need to be taken up and developed today, must not, of course, be used to substantiate the idea that actual, sacramental communion is superfluous or less important. For the "ex-communicate" is supported by the love of the living Body of Christ, by the sufferings of the saints, who unite with his suffering and his spiritual hunger, and both parties are enveloped by the suffering, the hunger, the thirst of Jesus Christ, who bears and endures us all.

On the other hand, the suffering of the excommunicate person, his stretching out for communion (the communion of the sacrament and of the living members of Christ) is the bond which unites him to the saving love of Christ. Thus, from both sides, the sacrament and the visible communion which it builds and nourishes are both present and indispensable. Here too, therefore, the "healing of love" takes place, which is the ultimate aim of Christ's Cross, of the sacrament and of the Church. We can understand how, paradoxically, the impossibility of sacramental communion, experienced in a sense of remoteness from God, in the pain of yearning which fosters the growth of love, can lead to spiritual progress.

Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, *Behold the Pierced One*, © 1986 Ignatius Press, San Francisco, CA. Used with permission.