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Prayers before and after...
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prayers

**BEFORE
AND AFTER
HOLY COMMUNION**

By St. Alphonsus Liguori

adapted by

H. J. O'CONNELL, C.S.S.R.



A LIGUORIAN PAMPHLET CLUB SELECTION

PRAYERS BEFORE
AND AFTER
HOLY COMMUNION



By ST. ALPHONSUS LIGUORI

adapted by H. J. O'CONNELL, C.S.S.R.

These beautiful prayers from the heart of St. Alphonsus, great lover of the Blessed Sacrament, will help us derive great spiritual fruit from Holy Communion.

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PRAYERS BEFORE AND AFTER HOLY COMMUNION



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Preparation for Communion

Nowhere in all His benefits does Our Savior show Himself more loving and tender than in Holy Communion, in which He becomes food in order to unite Himself to the hearts and bodies of the faithful. Hence, there is no more efficacious means than Holy Communion for enkindling devotion and the holy love of God in our souls.

Indeed, what can a soul do more agreeable to God than to receive Communion? Love always tends towards perfect union. But what union can be more perfect than that which Our Lord Himself describes when He says: "*He that eats my flesh and*

drinks my blood abides in me and I in him?" St. Augustine says that if every day you receive this Sacrament, Jesus will always be with you, and you will always advance in divine love.

Again, what more certain remedy can we have for healing our spiritual weakness than Holy Communion, which is called by the Council of Trent: "a medicine whereby we may be freed from daily faults and preserved from mortal sins?"

How does it happen, then, that often frequent Communion produces such little fruit in many souls, who relapse again and again into the same faults? The defect is not in the food, but in the dispositions of the one who receives. The Book of Proverbs asks: "*Can a man hide fire in his bosom, and his garments not burn?*" "*God is a consuming fire.*" He comes Himself in Holy Communion to enkindle this divine fire. How then can souls remain cold in divine love in the midst of such flames? This comes from the lack of proper dispositions, especially from want of preparation. Dry wood immediately catches fire;

but green wood does not, for it is not disposed to burn. The saints derived such great benefit from their Communion, because they prepared themselves with very great care.

In order to prepare well for Holy Communion, a soul should endeavor: 1) to detach itself from creatures; and 2) to awaken a great desire to advance in God's love.

First of all, then, the soul should detach itself from all things, and drive from its heart everything that is not for God. Jesus said: "*One who has bathed needs only to wash his feet in order to be wholly clean.*" Hence, as St. Bernard explains, in order to receive this sacrament with great fruit, we should not only be cleansed from mortal sin, but our feet also should be washed, that is, we should be free from earthly affections. For these, like the feet, being in contact with the earth, soil the soul and prevent the full effect of Holy Communion.

Secondly, it is necessary to have a great desire to receive Jesus Christ and to grow

in His love. In this sacred banquet only those who are hungry receive their fill. *“He has filled the hungry with good things.”* As Jesus only came into this world after He had been desired for a long time, so does He only enter the soul that longs for Him; for it is not becoming that such food should be given to one who has no taste for it. One day Our Lord said to St. Matilda, “No bee flies with such impetuosity to a flower to draw its nectar, as I fly to souls in Holy Communion, driven by the violence of my love.” Since then, Jesus Christ has so great a desire to come into our souls, it is right that we should also have a great desire to receive Him and His divine love in the Holy Communion. St. Francis de Sales teaches us that the chief object which a soul should have in view in receiving Communion should be to advance in the love of God; since He Who for love alone gives Himself to us should be received only for love.



ACTS BEFORE COMMUNION

1. An Act of Faith

“Behold, He comes leaping upon the mountains, skipping over the hills.” My most loving Savior, over how many rough and craggy mountains You had to pass in order to come and unite Yourself to me by means of this most Holy Sacrament! From being God, You had to become man; from being immense, to become a child; from being Lord, to become a servant. You had to pass from the bosom of Your eternal Father to the womb of a virgin; from heaven into a stable; from a throne of glory to the gibbet of a criminal. And on this very morning You will come from Your seat in heaven to dwell in my bosom.

“Behold He stands behind the wall looking through the windows, looking through the lattices.” Behold, O my soul, Your loving Jesus, burning with the same love with which He loved you when dying for you on the cross! Concealed now in the most Blessed Sacrament under the sacred species, what is He doing? *“Looking through*

the lattices.” As an ardent lover, desiring to see you correspond with His love, from the Host, as from within closed lattices whence he can see without being seen, He is looking at you who this morning are about to feed upon His divine flesh. He observes your thoughts, what it is that you love, what you desire, what you seek for, and what offerings you are about to make to Him.

Awaken, then, my soul, and prepare to receive your Jesus. Say to Him in faith: My beloved Redeemer, in a few moments you are coming to me! O hidden God, unknown to the greater part of men, I believe, I confess, I adore You in the most Holy Sacrament as my Lord and Savior! In defense of this truth I would willingly lay down my life. You are coming to enrich me with Your graces and to unite Yourself entirely to me. How great then should be my trust in You!

2. An Act of Confidence

My soul, expand your heart. Your Jesus can give you every grace you need. He

loves you. Hope then for great things from this your Lord Who comes in love to you.

Yes, my dear Jesus, my hope, I trust in Your goodness. I have confidence that in this Holy Communion You will enkindle in my poor heart the beautiful flame of Your love, and fill me with a real desire to please You; so that from this day forward I may never will anything but what you will.

3. An Act of Love

O my God, true and only love of my soul, what more could You have done to make Yourself loved by me? To die for me was not enough for You, my Lord. You were pleased to institute this great Sacrament in order to give Yourself entirely to me, and thus bind and unite Yourself heart to heart with so miserable and ungrateful a creature as I am. And what is more, You Yourself invite me to receive You, and desire very much that I should do so. O boundless love! Incomprehensible love! Infinite love! A God desires to give Himself entirely to me! Believing

this O my soul, must you not say: O God, O infinite goodness, the only object worthy of all my love, I love You with my whole heart, I love You above all things, I love You more than myself, more than my life! My Jesus, may You be loved by every heart! Oh, if I could only cause You to be loved by all hearts as much as You deserve! I love You, O my most loving God, and I unite my poor heart in loving You to the hearts of the seraphim, to the heart of the Most Blessed Virgin Mary, to the hearts of all who love You. I love You because You are infinitely worthy of my love. I love You because it is Your desire that I love You. Depart from my heart all earthly affections that are not from God. Most Holy Virgin Mary, Mother of fair love, help me to love that God Whom you so ardently desire to see loved by all.

4. An Act of Humility

O my soul, you are even now about to receive the most sacred body and blood of Jesus Christ. Are you worthy? My God, who am I, and Who are You? Is it possible, O my Jesus, that You Who are infin-

ite purity desire to come and dwell in this soul of mine which has so many times been the dwelling of Your enemy, and soiled with so many sins? I recognize, O my Lord, Your great majesty and on the other hand my own misery. I am ashamed to appear before You. Reverence would indeed induce me to keep at a distance from You; but if I depart from You, O my life, whither shall I go? To whom shall I have recourse? What would become of me? No, never will I depart from You! Indeed, I will always draw nearer and nearer to You. You are content to become my food. You even invite me to receive You. I come then, O my most loving Savior, I come to receive You this morning humbled and confused at the sight of my defects; but full of confidence in Your tender mercy and in the love which You bear to me.

5. An Act of Contrition

I am very sorry, O God of my soul, for not having loved You in the past. Even worse, instead of loving You, I have greatly offended and outraged Your infinite

goodness in order to gratify my own desires. I have turned my back upon You; I have despised Your grace and friendship; in a word O my God I have deliberately sinned against You. Lord, I am sorry, and grieve for it with my whole heart. I detest the sins which I have committed, both great and small, as the greatest of all my misfortunes, because I have thereby offended You, O infinite goodness! I trust that You have already forgiven me, but if You have not yet pardoned me, do so before I receive You. Wash with Your blood this soul of mine, in which You are so soon about to dwell.

6. An Act of Desire

Now, my soul the blessed hour has arrived in which Jesus will come and take up His abode in your poor heart. Behold the King of heaven; behold your Redeemer and God Who is even now coming. Prepare yourself to receive Him with love. Invite Him with the ardor of your desire.

Come, O my Jesus, come to my soul which desires to receive You! Even before

You give Yourself to me, I desire to give to You my miserable heart. Accept it, and come quickly to take possession of it. Come, my God! Hasten; delay no longer. My only and infinite good, my treasure, my life, my paradise, my love, my all, I desire to receive You with the same love with which the most holy and loving souls have received You; with the same love with which the Most Blessed Virgin Mary received You! To their communions unite this communion of mine.

Most Holy Virgin, my Mother Mary, behold I approach to receive your Son. Share with me the love that filled your own blessed heart. Give me this morning my Jesus, as you gave Him to the shepherds and to the kings. I intend to receive Him from your most pure hands. Tell Him that I am your servant and your child; for He will then look upon me with a more loving eye, and when He comes will bind me more closely to Himself.



Thanksgiving after Holy Communion

There is no private prayer more agreeable to God, or more profitable to the soul, than that which is made during the thanksgiving after Communion. It is the opinion of many Theologians that the Holy Communion, so long as the sacramental species lasts, constantly produces greater and greater graces in the soul, provided the soul is constant in disposing itself by new acts of virtue. For this reason, holy souls endeavor to remain as long as possible in prayer after Communion. The Venerable Father Avila, even during the busy time of the Missions, use to remain for two hours in prayer. Father Balthasar Alvarez was accustomed to declare that we should set great value on the time after Communion, imagining that we hear from the lips of Jesus Christ Himself the words that He addressed to His disciples: "*But Me you have not always with you.*"

After Communion it is not advisable to begin to read at once. It is then better to spend at least a short time in conversing with Jesus Who is within us, and in re-

peating many times words of tenderness and heartfelt prayers. Jesus Christ repeated the same prayer in the Garden three times: "*And He prayed the third time, saying the self-same words.*" After Communion we should entertain ourselves with Jesus by affections and prayers. For we must know that the acts made after Communion are far more precious and meritorious in the sight of God than those made at another time. For the soul, being then united with Jesus, the value of the acts is increased by His sacred presence. We should know moreover that after Communion Jesus Christ is more disposed to grant us graces. St. Therese says that after Communion Jesus places Himself in the soul as on the throne of grace and then says: "*What wilt thou that I should do for thee?*" O soul I am come for the express purpose of granting you graces; ask Me what you will, and as much as you will, you shall receive all."

O, what treasures of grace you would receive, devout soul, if you only entertained yourself with Jesus for half an hour or at least fifteen minutes after Commun-

ion! For this purpose you can read the following Acts. After your prayer is ended be careful during the whole day on which you have communicated to keep yourself united by affections and prayers to Jesus Whom you have received.

ACTS AFTER COMMUNION

1. An Act of Faith

Behold, my God is even now come to visit me! My Savior dwells in my soul. My Jesus is now within me. He has come to make Himself mine and at the same time to make me His. Jesus is mine and I belong to Jesus; Jesus is all mine and I am all His!

O infinite goodness! O infinite mercy! O infinite love! My God has come to unite Himself to me, and to make Himself all mine! My soul, now that you are thus closely united to Jesus what will you say to Him? Will you not lovingly converse with your God Who is within you? Ah yes, renew your faith. Remember that the angels now surround you, adoring their God,

Who is within your breast. Do you also adore your Lord within your heart. Enter into yourself and banish thence every other thought. Unite all your affections, and clinging close to your God say:

2. An Act of Welcome

O, my Jesus, my love, my infinite good, my all, be ever welcome in the poor dwelling of my soul! Ah my Lord, to what a poor place you have come! You have entered my heart which is far worse than the stable in which You were born. It is full of earthly affections, of self-love, and of disordered desires. I should say to thee with St. Peter: "*Depart from me, for I am a sinful man.*" Yes, depart from me, O Lord, for I am indeed unworthy to receive the God of infinite goodness. Go and find repose in those pure souls who serve You with so much love. But no, my Redeemer; what do I say? Leave me not; for if You depart, I am lost. I embrace You; I cling to You. Foolish indeed have I been in having separated myself from You for the love of creatures. In my ingratitude I drove You from me by my sins. But now I will never separate myself from You again,

my treasure. I desire to live and die ever united to You. Most Blessed Virgin Mary, ye seraphim, and all ye holy souls who love God with pure love, lend me your affections, that I may worthily attend to my beloved Lord.

3. An Act of Thanksgiving

My Lord and my God, I thank You for the grace which You have this morning bestowed on me of coming to dwell in my soul. I wish to thank You in a manner worthy of the great favor which You have done for me. But how can so miserable a creature as I am ever worthily thank You?

Filled with wondering astonishment at the thought that You have come within my heart, I can only repeat again and again: "My God is united to me; my God is all mine!" "*What shall I render to the Lord for all the things that He has rendered to me?*" What return shall I make to You, my Jesus, Who, after so many other benefits, have this morning given me Yourself? My soul bless, and thank your God as best you can. And you, my Mother

Mary, my holy advocates, my Guardian Angel and all you souls who love God come and bless and thank God for me, admiring and praising the great graces which He has granted me. *“Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will tell you what great things He hath done for my soul.”*

4. An Act of Oblation

“My Beloved to me, and I to Him.” If a king would go to visit a poor shepherd, what could the poor shepherd offer him other than his whole house, such as it is? Since then, Jesus, my divine King, You have come to visit the poor house of my soul, I offer and give You this house and my entire self, together with my liberty and my will: *“My Beloved to me, and I to Him.”* You have given Yourself all to me; I give myself all to You. My Jesus, from this day forward I will be no longer mine own; I will be Yours and all Yours. I give You my body with its senses, that they may serve only to please You. And what greater pleasure can be found, than that of pleasing You, my most amiable,

most loving, most gracious God? At the same time I give You all the powers of my soul, and I will that they should all belong to You. My memory I will only use to recall to mind Your benefits and love. My understanding I will only use to think of You Who are always thinking of me. My will shall be used only to love You, my God and my all, and to will only what You will.

My most sweet Lord, I offer and consecrate to You this morning all that I am and have: my senses, my thoughts, my affections, my desires, my pleasures, my inclinations, my liberty. In a word, I place my whole body and soul in Your hands.

Accept, O infinite majesty, this offering of the most ungrateful sinner You have ever had upon the earth, but now who gives himself entirely to You. Do with me and dispose of me, O Lord, as You please.

Come, O consuming fire, O divine love! Consume in me all that is mine, all that is displeasing in Your most pure eyes, so that henceforward I may be all Yours, and may

live only to fulfill, not only Your commands and counsels, but also all Your holy desires and Your good pleasure. Amen.

O most holy Mary, present this offering of mine to the most blessed Trinity with your own hands: obtain Their acceptance of it, and the grace for me to be faithful unto death. Amen amen.

5. An Act of Petition

O my soul, what are you doing? The present is no time to be lost; it is a precious time, in which you can receive all the graces that you ask. The Eternal Father is now looking upon you with love, for He sees within you His Son, the dearest object of His love. Drive then far away all other thoughts; rekindle your faith, enlarge your heart, and ask for whatever you will.

Do you not hear Jesus Himself thus speaking to you: "*What wilt thou that I should do to thee?*" O soul tell Me what you desire of Me? I am come for the express purpose of enriching you and filling you with My graces. Ask with confidence and you will receive all.

O my most sweet Savior, since You have come into my heart in order to grant me graces, and desire that I should ask You for them, I ask not for the goods of the earth: riches, honors, or pleasures; but grant me, I beseech You, intense sorrow for the displeasure that I have caused You. Impart to me so clear a light that I may know the vanity of this world and see how deserving You are of my love. Change this heart of mine. Detach it from all earthly affections. Give me a heart conformed in all things to Your holy will that it may seek only what is more pleasing to You, and have no other desire than Your holy love. *“Create a clean heart in me, O God.”*

I do not deserve this; but You my Jesus do deserve it, since You are come to dwell within my soul. I ask it of You through Your merits and those of Your most holy Mother, and by the love which You bear to Your Eternal Father.

(Here pause to ask Jesus for particular graces and favors for yourself and for your neighbors. Do not forget poor sinners, and the souls in Purgatory)

Eternal Father, Jesus Christ Himself, Your Son has said: "*Amen, amen I say to you, if you ask the Father anything in My name, He will give it to you.*" For the love then of this Son Whom I now bear within my breast, graciously hear me and grant my petitions.

"Jesus and Mary for You may I suffer; for You may I die. May I be all Yours."

INDULGENCED PRAYERS AFTER COMMUNION

Behold, O good and sweetest Jesus, I cast myself upon my knees in Thy sight, and with the most fervent desire of my soul I pray and beseech Thee to impress upon my heart lively sentiments of faith, hope and charity, true repentance for my sins and a most firm purpose of amendment: whilst with deep affection and grief of soul I consider within myself and mentally contemplate Thy five most precious Wounds, having before mine eyes that which David, the prophet, long ago spoke in Thine own person concerning Thee, my Jesus: *They have pierced my hands and my feet; they have numbered all my bones.*

The faithful, who recite this prayer devoutly before an image of Jesus Christ Crucified, may gain:

An indulgence of 10 years; a plenary indulgence if, moreover, they go to confession, receive Holy Communion and pray for the intentions of the Sovereign Pontiff. (From: The Raccolta)

O Christ Jesus, I acknowledge Thee to be the King of the universe; all that hath been made is created for Thee. Exercise over me all Thy sovereign rights. I hereby renew the promises of my Baptism, renouncing Satan and all his works and pomps, and I engage myself to lead henceforth a truly Christian life. And in an especial manner do I undertake to bring about the triumph of the rights of God and Thy Church, so far as in me lies. Divine Heart of Jesus, I offer Thee my poor actions to obtain the acknowledgment by every heart of Thy sacred kingly power. In such wise may the kingdom of Thy peace be firmly established throughout all the earth. Amen.

A plenary indulgence on the usual conditions once daily (From: The Raccolta)

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