

In Christ,

In her Diary, *Divine Mercy in My Soul*, St. Faustina records this message of Jesus about the Sunday after Easter, now called “Divine Mercy Sunday”: *I desire that the Feast of Mercy be a refuge and shelter for all souls, and especially for poor sinners. On that day the very depths of My tender mercy are open. I pour out a whole ocean of graces upon those souls who approach the Fount of My Mercy. The soul that will go to Confession and receive Holy Communion shall obtain complete forgiveness of sins and punishment. On that day all the divine floodgates through which graces flow are opened. Let no soul fear to draw near to Me, even though its sins be as scarlet. My mercy is so great that no mind, be it of man or of angel, will be able to fathom it throughout all eternity.*

In the midst of our social distancing, we might be left wondering how we can fulfill the requirements of confession and Holy Communion in order to receive this great grace. Thankfully Jesus’ unfathomable mercy is not restricted by locked doors, as we see on the first Easter night when the apostles were hiding. He can still come to us, into our homes and through our closed doors, and say to us, “Peace be with you!” while he offers this grace (cf. John 20:19).

There is a way, based soundly on Church teaching and tradition, for us to respond to Jesus’ offer of infinite mercy. In regards to reconciliation, *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* 1452 says *When it arises from a love by which God is loved above all else, contrition is called “perfect” (contrition of charity). Such contrition remits venial sins; it also obtains forgiveness of mortal sins if it includes the firm resolution to have recourse to sacramental confession as soon as possible.*

When the time comes that we are able to return to normalcy in our community, one of my first priorities will be to schedule a penance service where confession will be available for an extended period of time so that everyone who makes a perfect act of contrition at this time will be able to fulfill their promise to go to confession right away.

This leaves the issue of Holy Communion. When we cannot receive Holy Communion we are encouraged to pray for a “Spiritual Communion”. By making an Act of Spiritual Communion, we express our faith in Christ’s Real Presence in the Eucharist and ask him to unite himself with us, even when we cannot receive the sacrament physically. In his encyclical *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, Pope St. John Paul II taught: *In the Eucharist, “unlike any other sacrament, the mystery [of communion] is so perfect that it brings us to the heights of every good thing: Here is the ultimate goal of every human desire, because here we attain God and God joins himself to us in the most perfect union.” Precisely for this reason it is good to cultivate in our hearts a constant desire for the sacrament of the Eucharist. This was the origin of the practice of “spiritual communion,” which has happily been established in the Church for centuries and recommended by saints who were masters of the spiritual life. St. Teresa of Jesus wrote: “When you do not receive communion and you do not attend Mass, you can make a spiritual communion, which is a most beneficial practice; by it the love of God will be greatly impressed on you”.*

While we may not be able to gather to go to confession or receive Holy Communion at Mass, we should *trust* in the Lord’s desire to give to us his great gift of mercy, most of all on this Sunday of Divine Mercy. In order to fulfill his invitation to receive this great grace this Sunday, pray a perfect act of contrition – including with the firm resolution to go to confession as soon as it is available; make an act of Spiritual Communion; participate in a Mass via media; and pray the Chaplet of Divine Mercy.

Here is a formula for a perfect contrition and Spiritual Communion which you can use:

Eternal Father, please grant me perfect sorrow for my sins. I am sorry for my sins above all because they wound my relationship with You and the Sacred Heart of Your Son. Lord Jesus, I trust in Your unfathomable Divine Mercy. Please hear my contrition for sin. I promise to return to your tribunal of Mercy, the sacrament of penance, to confess my sins to Your priest and receive absolution as soon as possible. Please reconcile me now to You and Your Father, through the miraculous sanctification of the Holy Spirit.

“My Jesus, I believe that you are present in the most Blessed Sacrament. I love You above all things and I desire to receive You into my soul. Since I cannot now 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” (St. Alphonsus de Liguori).

Lord Jesus, You promised St. Faustina the special grace of complete forgiveness of sins and punishment to anyone who venerates Your Mercy on this day, the Feast of Your Divine Mercy, and who goes to confession and receives Holy Communion. Though I cannot go to confession or Mass, hear my prayers of perfect contrition and spiritual communion, and grant me that grace. Jesus, I Trust in You!

Totus Tuus,
Fr. Todd Lloyd