



Installment #1: Frequency of Reception of Holy Communion

The frequent and worthy reception of Holy Communion is a proven practice if one desires to grow in love of God and love of neighbor. By “worthy reception” I mean that the communicant is unaware of unconfessed grave sin, has fasted for at least one hour prior to the reception of the Eucharistic Lord, and has prepared oneself spiritually. However, it is important to note that even if one is unable to receive Holy Communion, one should still attend Holy Mass when one can and, except for the most serious of reasons, certainly on Sundays. Regrettably, I fear that many Catholics are unaware of this distinction. It is of course the case that reception of Holy Communion lies at the very heart of our Faith, and Jesus affirms this in the Gospel of John, Chapter 6. A worthy reception of Holy

Communion is the fullest form of active participation in the Mass. But it is not the only form of participation, and our obligation to worship God on Sundays and Holy Days remains even if we cannot receive Jesus sacramentally. What is more, our obligation to worship God on Sundays and Holy Days likewise remains even if we cannot physically be present at the Sacrifice of the Mass.

This is an important point to remember as we continue to fast from the Bread of Heaven during these difficult days. As a matter of fact, Holy Mother Church teaches that Catholics must receive Holy Communion at least once a year (this is called our Easter Duty). This mandated minimum is just that – a minimum, and one that should never convince us to grow slack in our desire to receive the Lord sacramentally. But it is a remarkably low threshold, and one that points to the historical fact that frequent, even daily communion is a relatively new reality in the history of the Church. It is a beautiful and life-giving reality to be sure, and one for which we all should give thanks to God. But this historical context may help us gain some perspective on our current situation and give us courage as we continue to wait and pray for the day when we will once again feast on the Lamb of God. It cannot come soon enough.