

## Spiritual Communion

This comes from our bishops as of Wednesday March 25. "In place of the Invitation ("The gifts of God for the people of God"), the following Prayer of Spiritual Communion, as used at Washington National Cathedral, is recommended:

*My Jesus, I believe that you are truly present in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar. I love you above all things, and long for you in my soul. Since I cannot now receive you sacramentally, come at least spiritually into my heart. As though you have already come, I embrace you and unite myself entirely to you; never permit me to be separated from you. Amen."*

**Explanation:** From "Spiritual Communion During the COVID-19 Pandemic" by Jonathan Warren Pagán

<https://anglicanpastor.com/spiritual-communion-during-the-covid-19-pandemic/>

Gathered worship in word and sacrament is therefore not an optional add-on for Christians. We cannot simply upload our worship online and expect that nothing will be lost. And yet to meet publicly now constitutes a massive public health risk, which is inconsistent with our duty to love our neighbors as ourselves.

We should suspend our gathered worship during this season and move to online formats so as to do our part for the common good, to "flatten the curve" of this pandemic. But at the same time, we must regard the present crisis as an impairment in our communion with each other and with the Lord. It is something we should lament and mourn, both in our private devotions and in our online, virtual gatherings. This is not the way it's supposed to be.

Nevertheless, we need to be encouraged by the fact that this is not the first time the church has found itself in a position in which it was unable to meet corporately. It is not the first time that individuals have been kept from gathering for word and sacrament. Many times in the history of the church, hostile governments have suppressed public worship, making it impossible or nearly impossible for Christians to assemble.

In 1939, Fr. Walter Cizek, a Roman Catholic Polish-American priest, was serving in a mission in Poland when the Bolsheviks invaded his town and required him to close down the mission. He escaped eastward into the Soviet Union and lived under a pseudonym for two years, but was ultimately arrested in 1941. For the next two decades, Cizek was either imprisoned in harsh conditions or condemned to hard labor in a Soviet Gulag in Siberia. For nearly two years during this time he languished in solitary confinement.

The suffering of Cizek's story, which he recounts in *He Leadeth Me*, is almost overpowering to read, but what is more striking than the intensity of his suffering is the joy he experiences in the midst of it. What sustained him through these dark times was the joy of Christ's presence in the Eucharist. In the times when he was in solitary confinement or otherwise unable to celebrate it, he practiced spiritual communion.