All spiritual doctors agree on what are the two things principally necessary for the reception of Communion, namely, the proper disposition of the soul and the right desire. However, since the right desire is part of the proper disposition of soul, we can say that only one thing is required, namely, the proper disposition of the soul. Let us see, then, how we are to place our souls in the proper disposition, in so far as this is possible, in order to worthily receive Communion. For the subject we are treating, let us consider the principal faculties of the soul.

With regard to our understanding, we need to cleanse it of one thing and adorn it with another. We first have to purge it of all curiosity so that it does not seek to know how the body, blood, and Divinity of our Lord can be completely contained in the sacred host and in each part of it; nor how he can be on earth while being in heaven; nor how it can be true that, being only one body, he can, nevertheless, be in so many places, on so many altars, and in so many mouths. No, we have to keep our understanding checked and closed to such vain and useless questions and inquiries, for we do not have to know how this divine sacrament comes about; we only have to know that it does. It is up to God to see how it is brought about. We need not trouble ourselves about it. We only have to be concerned about believing it and taking advantage of it.

This point is applicable to all of the mysteries of our faith and to several other things as well, like the creation of the world, about which we are not able to say what
God did when he created it, nor how he creates our soul and places it in our body. To what end, then, is it necessary to know how he puts his most holy body, blood and soul into this sacrament? It is up to him to do it; it is up to us to believe it. This mystery was prefigured by the heavenly manna, which in the past fell in the desert not in daytime but at night to signify that no one knew how it came about nor how it came down; but when morning came, it was seen as having come down and completely finished (see Exod. 16:14; Num. 11:9). Thus does this heavenly and divine manna of the Eucharist come about in the same way, which is mysterious and hidden. No one can say how it comes about and comes to us, but by the light of faith we see it accomplished.

But if the evil spirit sends temptations contrary to this purity of understanding, we must oppose them by humbling ourselves before the omnipotence of God either saying interiorly or orally:

Oh holy and immense omnipotence of my God, my understanding adores you and is extremely honored to acknowledge and pay you homage by my obedience and submission. You are so incomprehensible, and I am overjoyed that you are! No, I would not want to understand you for you would be too little if one with so little and pitiful capability were able to understand you. What, little gnat, nourished by my corrupt flesh, do you want to burn your wings in this immense fire of the divine power, which would consume and devour the Seraphim if they wanted to meddle with such questions? No, little moth, you only have to adore this mystery and not sound its depths.

On occasion you can respond to the tempter:

Oh miserable one, your presumption of wanting to fly too high has precipitated you into hell. With the help of God’s grace, I am not about to make a similar leap. This is the way you deceived poor Eve when she wanted to know as much as God, but you will not trap me. I want to believe and not know anything of how it comes about.

It is also good at times to despise this hairsplitting and temptation and take no account of them whatsoever. Let this evil one yap and bark and pass by on his way. For while he is enraged, he will bite only those who want to be. And so, holding fast in faith, let him bark as much as he wants; we fear nothing.
Considerations With Which We Must Adorn Our Understanding

This is the way we have to purify our understanding. But this is not sufficient, for we still have to strengthen and fortify it with something else. We must reinforce it with considerations. And what do we have to consider? We must not consider how this sacrament comes about, for this would be to lose ourselves, but we need to consider what this sacrament is. As a prefiguring, the Israelites did not ask how the manna came about, but seeing it there, they asked what it was. “What is this?,” they said, “What is this?” (Exod. 16:15). Let us consider then what this divine sacrament is, and we will discover that it is the true body of Our Lord, his blood, soul and divinity. It is the mystery of the most intimate union that our Redeemer could have with us. It is the most complete communication that he could make of himself, by means of which he joins himself to us in a marvelous fashion, one replete with love. In a word, this sacrament is Jesus Christ himself, who, in an unparalleled fashion, comes to us and draws us to himself.

How We Must Cleanse Our Memory

With regard to our memory, we must cleanse it of one thing and adorn it with another. We must cleanse it of the memory of temporal things and worldly matters as prefigured by the manna which only fell in the desert and in solitude, apart from worldly commerce, and not in cities and villages. Those who ate the paschal lamb drew up their robes (Exod. 12:11) so that nothing dragged and hanged on the ground. For a time, then, we must put out of our mind material and temporal things, however good and useful, to prepare ourselves for Holy Communion and do like Abraham, who, desiring to go sacrifice his son, left his ass and his servants at the foot of the mountain until he had finished (Gen. 22:5). In like manner, we have to turn our minds away from thinking about domestic and temporal matters until after Communion – all things having their appropriate time (Eccl. 3:1).

After this voluntary forgetfulness, we have to adorn our memory with the holy remembrance of all the blessings which God has bestowed on us: creation, preserving us in life, redemption and several others, but above all of his holy passion, in memory of which he wanted to leave us, in this divine sacrament, his own body which suffered for us. He could not have left us a more vivid and expressive representation. When you are asked (says the holy word treating the observing of the paschal meal [Exod. 12:26,27]) what it is that you are doing, tell posterity that it is in memory of how God delivered you from Egypt, by passing through the Red Sea. Thus, in this divine sacrament, we must recall the day in which God, by his bitter passion, delivered us from damnation.
**How We Must Cleanse Our Will and With What We Must Adorn It**

With regard to the will, we must also cleanse it from one thing and adorn it with another. We must cleanse it of disordered and inordinate affections, even of good things. This is why those who ate the paschal lamb had to have their feet shod (Exod. 12:11) so that they would not touch the ground with their feet, for “the feet are the affections of the soul” which carry it wherever it goes, says St. Augustine (Enarrt. in Ps. 94:2). These affections must not touch the ground nor be given free rein but must be restrained and checked when eating the true Paschal Lamb, which is the Most Holy Sacrament. Thus does Our Lord wash the feet of his apostles before instituting it (John 13:5-9) to show that the affections of communicants must be very pure. The manna had to be gathered early in the morning before the sun came up because the natural warm breezes – that is, the inordinate affections for children, parents, friends, material things, and comforts – prevent us from gathering this heavenly food. We have to approach it with a fresh soul and will, not one impassioned nor smitten by any other thing except the gathering of this manna.

But we have to adorn it with the will of an affection and extreme desire for this heavenly food, of this hidden manna. This is why those who ate the paschal lamb were commanded to do so eagerly and quickly (Exod. 12) and those who gathered it to get up very early (Exod. 16:21). Our Lord himself, before instituting this holy sacrament, greatly desired it: “I have desired,” he said, “with a great desire to eat this Passover meal with you” (Luke 22:15).

The soul, being disposed in this fashion in its three principal faculties, bears admirable fruit in Holy Communion. But since this preparation is given in general terms, I will set forth here specific advice on how to practice it.

**Advice on How to Reduce to Practice the Preparation for Holy Communion**

If you are not bothered at all by temptations to curiosity, you do not have to concern yourself about what I have said on this subject, for by thinking about it, you could open the door to let them in. You only have to thank God for having given you the simplicity of faith, which is a very precious and desirable gift, and beg his divine majesty to continue to give it to you.

But if you are troubled by this spirit of curiosity, do what I have said, but do it briefly by simply rejecting and detesting it without desiring to dispute or debate with the enemy, who has to be fought with loathing and not by reason, after the example
of Our Lord, who made him flee by saying to him: “Get thee behind me, Satan; you shall not tempt the Lord your God” (Matt. 4:10, 7).

However long the temptation lasts, do not stop going to Communion. For if you stop because of this, you will give the advantage to your adversary in this battle. Go, then, with confidence and without being concerned about these temptations, and receive the Bread of Life (John 6:35, 48). In this way, you will triumph over your enemy. The one who quits, loses.

To overcome curiosity in this matter, overcome it in all aspects however insignificant they may be without seeking any other knowledge than that of the saints, with Jesus crucified (I Cor. 2:2) and that which leads you to him.

Speaking of considerations, it will be helpful on the day before you go to Communion during your time of mental prayer or spiritual recollection, to turn your mind a bit to Our Lord in this holy sacrament, and even at the end of your examination of conscience. This can be done by some brief thought on the Savior’s love on your behalf. You can also use some vocal spiritual aspirations, which you can repeat often, especially from Vespers on: like that of St. Francis (Speculum vitae S. Francesco): “Who am I Lord, and who are you?” Or that of St. Elizabeth: “Whence comes this happiness that my Lord should come to me?”(Luke 1:43). Or that of St. John the Evangelist”: Yes, come Lord Jesus!(Rev. 22:20). Or that of the sacred spouse: “May my spouse kiss me with the kiss of his mouth” (Cant. 1:1).

If at times you would like to make your meditation on Communion the day before, you could easily accommodate the mysteries of the life of Our Lord, which you would encounter in the course of your mental prayer, by applying them as you would to your advantage at the time you receive the Eucharist. For what will prevent you from imagining that Our Lord presents to you the blessings that he has brought about, or inspires you interiorly with the teachings he has given? There are other considerations as well. There are few mysteries which do not lend themselves to this.

For the memory, it is good to have it composed as much as possible, and that especially after supper you not occupy yourself either mentally or physically with any affair that might take you away from the plan of going to Communion. However, you should recollect your mind in a special way and draw all of your senses within yourself in order to wait for the Bridegroom with lamps in your hand and oil that does not run out (Matt. 25:1,4,8,9). To do this effectively, let your recreation after the evening meal be more devout and with charitable
conversation, and your meal more sparse, however without being gloomy nor making it too austere.

In order to assist the community to recall God’s blessings on the day they are going to Holy Communion, I would let each sister know the day on which she is to receive and the other special graces received from God. In as much as humility and Christian simplicity permit, the evening before Communion, remind the sisters during the time of recreation and at the end to ask them to thank God with you. This is to be understood for their birthday. This does not occur always, but from time to time.

With regard to purging of the will, we must keep it unfettered at all times from all disordered affections, especially on going to Communion, and consider to what and to whom our affections cling in this world and to see whether they are too sentimental or too ardent. If we see they are excessive, we must get rid of them little by little so as to be able to say to Our Lord with David (Ps. 72:25-26): “What is there in heaven for me, or what do I wish for on earth if not you? You are the God of my heart and my eternal inheritance.” For this reason, Our Lord comes to us so that we can all be in him and belong to him. This would not be so if we nourish inordinate affections even in good and legitimate things.

With regard to desiring to receive this holy sacrament, we must arouse this desire by the love of the Spouse and by considering the honor and the good we receive at his coming to us. This is the purpose of the spiritual aspirations and the considerations that I mentioned above along with the imaginative ways in which I describe them.

If you awaken at night, you should fill your mouth with some good aspiration, like the names of Jesus and Mary, which are quite fitting to freshen our mouth in which Our Lord desires to enter, or else with the words of the Spouse (Cant. 5:2): “I sleep, but my heart keeps watch over my beloved” and similar thoughts.

In the morning, you must get up with an extraordinary joy because of the great good you are to receive on that day. Thus will you prepare to receive Holy Communion.

On going to receive Holy Communion, keep your eyes lowered and maintain a humble demeanor. I do not approve of saying any vocal prayer at the time of the reception, except: “Lord, I am not worthy” (Matt. 8:8) and the Confiteor. Nor do I approve of heaving a sigh since this might cause the hosts to fall from the paten or ciborium. I also do not approve of extending your tongue beyond the lips nor of opening your mouth so little that it is difficult to place the Sacred Host on the
tongue, nor moving forward in any way to take it since the minister may miss the tongue of the person moving forward and thereby cause an irreverence. You should open your mouth and lift up your head and wait for the priest to place the Sacred Host in your mouth without making any other movement until you have received the host. I approve of keeping your hands under and not on top of the cloth. Returning to your place should be done in the same manner.

On the day you receive Communion, you should, as much as possible, cherish the Sacred Host which you have received and hence cast aside other concerns, for it is at such a time that He usually speaks more soothingly to our heart and distributes more favorably his graces by the real presence of his humanity. This is why we should talk to him about our needs, weaknesses and imperfections. At that moment, we should converse with him about our plans, intentions and aims regarding our love for him, of the hope we have in him, briefly, to give ourselves to him as he gives himself to us. Now all of this is to be done by interior and vocal aspirations, by interior glances on the One whom we possess and by mental prayer in keeping with the time we have at our disposal a little after Communion.

I am now going to propose several points which you can use both for going to Communion as well as for giving thanks to God after Communion.

Before going to Communion we can increase our desire by comparing ourselves to the thirsty and panting deer, as David does in Psalm 42, which is worth reading since you have it in French, or we can follow the example of Mary Magdalene, who lovingly looked for him everywhere – at the home of Simon the Leper, in the sepulcher, in the garden – who tearfully sought him and asked him to show her the place where they put him: “If you have taken him away,” she said, “tell me and I will go and bring him back” (John 20:11,15). At times we can be like the prodigal son, arousing ourselves so as to throw ourselves into the arms of our Father asking him to take us back into his service (Luke 15:18,19). At times like the Canaanite woman, we can arouse ourselves to run after him and ask him to heal our souls. At other times like Rebecca, who, when asked if she would go to find Isaac to be her spouse, she simply answered, “I will go” (Gen. 24:58). We must also consider that in this heavenly banquet we unite our souls by an indissoluble bond with our Lord. This is why we have reason to say, “Vadam, I will go.” In this way, we will intensify our desire, our love and confidence, with great reverence.

After Communion, we should dispose our souls to several affections, as for example, the feat of saddening or losing this Sacred Host and as David did, saying: “Forsake me not, O Lord” (Ps. 37:22). Or, like the two pilgrims on the road to Emmaus who said to him: “Remain with us, for it is getting late” (Luke 24:29). With the confidence
and spiritual strength of David, “I will fear no evil because, Lord, you are with me” (Ps. 22:4). We can say with a joyful heart and after the example of the good Leah, who, seeing that she had conceived a son in her womb, cried out with great joy, “Now my husband will love me!” (Gen. 29:32). When we have in us the Son of God, we can well say, “Now God the Father loves me!” Or like Sarah, when bearing Isaac, “The Lord has now given me great joy and whoever listens to him will rejoice with me over this blessing” (Gen. 25:5, 6). And it is also true that the angels have a festive time with this Holy Sacrament and with those who receive it, as St. Chrysostom says. With the spouse, who says in this regard, “My beloved is mine and I am his; he will dwell between my breasts, that is, on my heart. I have found him whom my soul cherishes and I will carefully keep him” (Can. 3:4).

For an act of thanksgiving, we can say the words that God himself spoke to Abraham when he had agreed to sacrifice his son, for we can address them to God the Father who gives us his own Son as food: “O Lord, because you have given me this great grace, I will bless you with immortal blessings and multiply your praises like the stars of the sky” (Gen. 22:16, 17).

In resolving to serve him, we can use the words of Jacob after he had seen the sacred ladder: “God will be my God, and my heart of stone, previously hardened, will be his dwelling.” In this way, you can draw a thousand affections from Holy Communion.

We still must use our imagination to help us appropriately entertain our Host. Now we can do this in different ways. The most useful are those of Our Lady and of St. Joseph. How many delights and consolations did they experience during his infancy when they carried him in their arms and close to their breast, kissed him, and these divine little arms so tenderly embraced them! Then we should consider that we become similar to them by Communion, in which Our Lord unites himself more closely to us than if he were to kiss and embrace us.

With regard to our Lady, let us imagine what the depth of her interior ardor, her devotion, her humility, her confidence, her courage was when the angel said to her: “The Holy Spirit will come upon you and the power of the Most High will overshadow you and the one to be born of you will be called the Son of the God for nothing is impossible with God” (Luke 2:33, 35). We must not doubt that her blessed heart completely expanded at the splendor of these words, that it acquired new depths under such blessings, and as it understood that God was giving her his heart, who is His Son, she reciprocated by giving herself to God, and that then this soul unparalleled in holiness melted in charity and could say: “My soul melted within me when my beloved spoke to me” (Cant. 5:6).
We receive a similar grace at Communion, for not an angel but Jesus Christ himself assures us that the Holy Spirit comes to us in this sacrament and the heavenly power overshadows us and the Son of God really comes to us, and, in a manner of speaking, he is conceived and born in us. O God! What great tenderness and gentleness! Consequently, after this reflection, our soul can say as our Lady did: “Behold the servant of the Lord, be it done unto me according to your word” (Luke 1:28). And what word is this? According to the word which came from his sacred mouth, that he remains in the one who eats him, and the one who eats him remains in him. Whoever eats him will live for him, by him and in him and will never die (John 6:57, 58, 50, 51, 55, 59). This is why it is even good to say the Magnificat after Communion, to reflect on and ponder it. To do this, you will need to know its meaning in French.

I have not said anything of the cleansing of our conscience which is done by Confession, because everyone knows it has to be done either the evening before, or in the morning, and with great care and humility.

Perhaps you will find this instruction a bit too long, but you will have to remember two things. First, that you do not have to do all of this at the same time, but only use it to the extent that you are aware that you have need of it and use only those things that will help you. Secondly, that I have made this preparation a bit long so that you can assist others who may have need of it.

Finally, since the greatest means of growing in the spiritual life is a devout Communion, I recommend it to you. Be careful that no one goes to Communion out of habit or routine, but always to glorify God in this action and to unite herself to Him and to obtain the strength to serve him and endure all afflictions and temptations. Amen.

If some doubt should arise, or if you do not clearly understand what I have said, your extraordinary confessor can clarify it for you or I can if you send it to me.

I forgot to tell you that this sacrament not only unites you to Our Lord, but also with our neighbors with whom, by sharing the same food, we become the same thing. And one of its principal fruits is mutual charity and gentleness of heart toward each other, for we all cling to the same Lord and in Him we support each other heart to heart.