

BREAD OF LIFE
AND
CUP OF SALVATION:



GUIDELINES FOR HOLY COMMUNION
FOR
THOSE WHO SUFFER FROM CELIAC DISEASE
OR
ALCOHOL INTOLERANCE
AND
FOR THOSE WHO MINISTER TO THEM

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INTRODUCTION

In recent years, pastors across our diocese have received numerous questions from those afflicted with various manifestations of gluten intolerance, such as Celiac-Sprue disease. These questions are raised in regards to the reception of Holy Communion. Many gluten-intolerant sufferers are unable to ingest wheat flour commonly used in the preparation of communion wafers in the United States. Those who suffer from some form of alcohol intolerance are likewise restricted from receiving the Precious Blood.

I offer this guideline to priests, deacons, and all extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion so that we might better serve our fellow Catholics who suffer from these diseases.

What is gluten intolerance or “Celiac Disease”?

Celiac disease [also, “nontropical sprue” or “gluten-sensitive enteropathy”] is a digestive disease that damages the small intestine and interferes with the absorption of nutrients from food. People who have celiac disease cannot tolerate a protein called gluten, which is found in wheat, rye, and barley. When patients eat foods containing gluten, their immune system responds by damaging the small intestine.

In the small intestine, there are thousands of finger-like protrusions called villi. Nutrients from food are absorbed into the bloodstream through these villi. Without villi, a person becomes malnourished, regardless of the amount of food eaten.

Because the body’s own immune system causes the damage, celiac disease is considered an auto-immune disorder. It is a genetic disease, meaning that it runs in families. Sometimes the disease is triggered— becomes active for the first time – after surgery, pregnancy, childbirth, viral infection, or severe stress.

What is the treatment?

Those who suffer from gluten intolerance, especially that form known as “Celiac Sprue” disease, may each react differently to varying amounts of gluten contained in wheat bread and other products. Medical opinion on the best treatment for such people varies greatly. While most doctors advise patients with this condition to adopt a totally gluten-free diet, others merely restrict gluten intake. All doctors agree that the patient must adopt a special diet for a lifetime.

Some patients cannot improve on a gluten-free diet alone. Some patients’ intestines are so damaged that they need intravenous nutrition supplements. Drug treatments are currently being evaluated. But careful treatment is indeed critical, because people with celiac disease could develop complications such as cancer, osteoporosis, anemia, and seizures.

Can the person with gluten intolerance receive Communion?

The common advice given to many celiac-sprue and gluten-intolerant patients is to receive only the Precious Blood at Holy Communion. But even the Precious Blood - whether under the form of wine or mustum - must be carefully administered to persons with these conditions.

Additional concerns can emerge when the Precious Blood has been “contaminated” with gluten at the commingling rite, i.e., when the priest celebrant has placed a particle of the host in the chalice. A separate vessel of wine or mustum should be reserved for the gluten-intolerant communicant. One must not confuse these vessels at the altar or at a Communion station.

Alcohol Intolerance and the Reception of Holy Communion

Likewise, there are persons who cannot tolerate alcohol. They may be recovering alcoholics or their biological system cannot absorb alcohol into their bodies, particularly the liver. Those who are unable to consume alcohol, whether the lay faithful, deacons, or priests, may now substitute mustum for regular wine in the reception of Holy Communion with appropriate permission.

What is mustum?

Mustum is grape juice which contains no additives, is not pasteurized, and has a very low alcohol content (less than 1.0%) due to the fact that the fermentation process has been arrested briefly after its start. It is either fresh or may be preserved by methods that suspend its fermentation without altering its nature (e.g., freezing).

VALID MATTER FOR THE EUCHARIST

What does Church Law say about valid matter for the Eucharist?

Canon 924.4 in the Code of Canon Law requires that Eucharistic bread or hosts contain only wheat and water. The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith has ruled that a completely gluten-free host is invalid matter for the sacrament. However, they have determined that a low-gluten host is valid matter. They have also ruled that mustum is valid matter for the celebration of the Eucharist (cf. Prot N. 89/78-17498, attached; Section A§ 1,2,3).

May we use bread or a wafer made of rice flour?

No. Though it has been reported in other (arch) dioceses that pastors, out of what they consider a pastoral necessity, will provide a rice wafer, this has led to severe pastoral consequences. Because rice wafers are invalid matter, the Communion is deemed invalid.

How can a layperson, who suffers from these maladies, receive Communion?

A layperson affected by celiac disease, who is not able to receive Communion under the species of bread, including low-gluten hosts, may receive Communion under the species of wine only.

How can a priest who suffers from gluten or alcohol intolerance celebrate Mass?

Normally, a concelebrant must consume both the Body and Blood of Christ (GIRM 244-249). A priest unable to receive Communion under the species of bread, including low-gluten hosts, when taking part in a concelebration, may, with the permission of the Ordinary, receive Communion under the species of wine only. A priest unable to ingest even a minimal amount of wine, who finds himself in a situation where it is difficult to obtain or store mustum, when taking part in a concelebration, may with the permission of the Ordinary, receive Communion under the species of bread only.

If a priest is able to take wine, but only a very small amount, when he is the sole celebrant, the remaining species of wine may be consumed by a layperson participating in that celebration of the Eucharist.

The Ordinary is competent to give permission for an individual priest or layperson to use low-gluten hosts or mustum for the celebration of the Eucharist. The process for obtaining my permission follows.

This permission must be requested once, in writing, in each case. Upon review, it will be granted habitually for as long as the situation continues which occasioned the granting of the permission.

- ☒ When a priest is concelebrating Mass:
If he is intolerant of gluten, he may partake of the Precious Blood only. If he is intolerant of alcohol, he may partake of the Body of Christ only.

- ☒ When a priest is the sole celebrant:
If he is intolerant of gluten, he may use low-gluten hosts. If he is unable to receive Communion even from low-gluten hosts, he may not celebrate the Eucharist individually, nor may he preside at a concelebration. If a priest is intolerant of alcohol he may consecrate a separate chalice of mustum for his use.

- ☒ If a lay person is intolerant of gluten:
He/she should inform the pastor of this condition. The pastor, in turn, must seek my permission for each case. The sacristan should store small amounts of low gluten hosts in the sacristy and the priest must follow the procedures as outlined in this guideline.

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

Have there been any recent developments?

An active dialogue with experts on both these conditions, as well as with various Vatican dicasteries, has now resulted in several new developments relative to the reception of Holy Communion for those with these conditions.

A new product offers hope.

Prior to now, the only low-gluten hosts available to parishes in the United States were from European suppliers. The Benedictine Sisters of Perpetual Adoration of Clyde, Missouri, have developed a true low gluten host and began selling it on January 1, 2004. This product is the only true, low-gluten altar bread known to the USCCB Secretariat on the Liturgy and approved for use at Mass in the United States. "It contains 37 micrograms of gluten and appears slightly yellow; it varies in size ... and looks like a bubbly potato chip" (Sr. Jeanne Patricia Crowe, pharmacist).

The total gluten content of this product is 0.01%. It contains unleavened wheat and water and it is free of additives. Therefore, it conforms to the requirements of the Code of Canon Law, (canon 924.2). This host contains enough gluten to confect bread for the Eucharist.

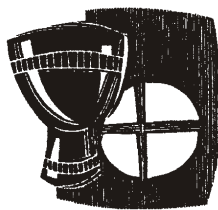
Many gluten-intolerant persons may be able to consume it, or some portion of it, but are strongly advised to check with their personal physicians in advance.

What do I offer to those who are on a totally gluten-free diet?

Those who cannot tolerate any gluten at all, often receive only from the cup, because they cannot even handle the 0.01% of gluten in the low-gluten hosts.

How do I safely handle this bread at the altar?

It is important that low-gluten hosts do not come into contact with the other hosts or bread.



PROCEDURES FOR MASS
AT WHICH A PERSON WITH CELIAC DISEASE OR ALCOHOL INTOLERANCE IS PRESENT

Storage

A small supply of low-gluten hosts and/or mustum should be routinely ordered. Since low-gluten hosts and mustum have a very short “shelf life” before they become spoiled, one should order them in small quantities.

Low-gluten hosts must be carefully stored in the sacristy, clearly labeled, and not come into contact with any other hosts. The supply should be replenished only as needed. Likewise, a small amount of mustum may be stored; it should be refrigerated after it has been opened.

Before Mass

The person with Celiac Sprue or alcohol intolerance should stop in the sacristy before Mass and identify themselves to the presider and/or extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion. It might also be helpful to announce where they will be sitting during Mass – preferably near the front, so they are at the beginning of the Communion procession.

At the Presentation of the Gifts

A low-gluten host may be placed in a pyx. A small amount of mustum may be placed in a special chalice, clearly distinguishable from the others.

Either the pyx or chalice [or both, if person(s) require them] is brought forward at the Presentation of the Gifts. They are carried in separate vessels from the other bread and wine.

During the Eucharistic Prayer

Before or during the Eucharistic Prayer, the pyx is opened on the altar. The chalice of mustum is on the altar, uncovered.

During the Fraction Rite

The presider should be careful not to handle this host, after he has handled large quantities of the wheat bread – for example, after he distributes the bread into several ciboria at the Fraction Rite. Perhaps, an extraordinary minister, who by their very liturgical role has not participated in the fraction rite, might pick up the pyx and distribute Communion to the person who suffers from gluten intolerance.

What if a person with zero tolerance for gluten is present at Mass?

When a parishioner or guest has zero tolerance for gluten, parishes may wish to adapt the following procedure during the Preparation of the Gifts and the Altar and the Communion Rite.

Persons with zero tolerance for gluten must have a chalice from which only they receive. They disinfect it at home before the liturgy. The chalice is placed in a plastic Zip-Lock® bag and is brought to the church. The chalice remains in the bag until it is filled with wine. Some distinction of the chalice is most important so as not to confuse it with the other chalices on the altar. The chalice is brought forward at the Preparation of the Gifts.

During the Fraction Rite, care must be taken not to place a particle of the Eucharistic bread in that particular chalice. The presider, deacon or extraordinary minister of Communion, following his/her own Communion, distributes the Blood of Christ to the person(s) with Celiac Sprue. The person then goes back to his/her seat.

In all matters, kindness...

It is always important that we do not judge those who only receive Communion from the cup. Moreover, the Communion procession is not the time to try to “correct” or “provide catechesis” to those receiving from the cup nor to the assembly. Speak with your pastor after the liturgy.

Be aware of people in your parish who suffer from gluten or alcohol intolerance. Understanding the complexity of Celiac Sprue disease will afford a greater sense of hospitality and a more inclusive experience of liturgy for all of us.

If you have Celiac Sprue disease, please contact your pastor to discuss the best procedure. We welcome you to the Lord’s Table!

RESOURCES

DIRECTIVES: CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH

Rescriptum, 15 December 1980, in *Leges Ecclesiae*, 6/4819, 8095-8096;
De Celebrantis Communione, 28 October 1982, in AAS 74, 1982, 1298-1299;
Lettera ai Presidenti delle Conferenze Episcopali, 19 June 1995, in *Notitiae* 31, 1995, 608-610

LOW-GLUTEN HOSTS

(37 micrograms of gluten, less than 0.01%)
Congregation of Benedictine Sisters of Perpetual Adoration
Altar Breads Department
31970 State Highway P
Clyde, MO 64432
Telephone: 1-800-223-2772
Email: altarbreads@benedictinesisters.org
Contact: Sr. Rita, OSB, Manager

MUSTUM

Ranelle Trading/Ojai Fresh Juice Corporations
2501 Oak Hill Circle, Suite 2032
Ft. Wayne, TX 76109
Telephone: 877-211-7690 (toll free)
Email: mike@ojaifresh.com
Contact: Mr. Mike Ranelle, President

Mont La Sale Altar Wine Company
385 a La Fata Street
St. Helena, CA 94575
Telephone: 707-963-2521
Toll Free: 800-447-8466
Contact: Mr. James Cox, President

FOUNDATIONS & SOCIETIES

Celiac Disease Foundation
13251 Ventura Blvd., Suite 1
Studio City, CA 91604-1838
Telephone: 818-990-2354
Website: www.celiac.org

Celiac Sprue Association, USA, Inc.
P.O. Box 31700
Omaha, NE 68131-0700
Phone: 1-877-CSA-4CSA or (402) 558-0600

Catholic Celiac Society
Telephone: 914-737-5291
Email: info@catholicceliacs.org
Contact: Chris Spreitzer

For more information, please see the
BCL Newsletter, November 2003, p. 39.
Published by the USCCB Bishops' Committee on the Liturgy

APPENDIX: A LETTER FROM THE CONGREGATION FOR THE FAITH

Dated: July 24, 2003

Received: September 29, 2003
Office of the General Secretary
United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

Addressed to: Their Excellencies
The Presidents of the Episcopal Conferences

Prot: N. 89/78 - 17498

Your Excellency,

The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith has been for many years studying how to resolve the difficulties that some of the faithful encounter in receiving Holy Communion when for various serious reasons they are unable to consume normal bread or wine.

A number of documents on this question have been issued in the past in the interest of offering Pastors uniform and sure direction (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Rescriptum*, 15 December 1980, in *Leges Ecclesiae*, 6/4819, 8095-8096; *De Celebrantis Communionem*, 28 October 1982, in AAS 74, 1982, 1298-1299; *Lettera ai Presidenti delle Conferenze Episcopali*, 19 June 1995, in *Notitiae* 31, 1995, 608-610).

In light of the experience of recent years, it has been deemed necessary at this time to return to the topic, taking up the above-mentioned documents and clarifying them wherever necessary.

A. The use of gluten-free hosts and mustum

1. Hosts that are *completely* gluten-free are invalid matter for the celebration of the Eucharist.
2. Low-gluten hosts (*partially* gluten-free) are valid matter, provided they contain a sufficient amount of gluten to obtain the confection of bread without the addition of foreign materials and without the use of procedures that would alter the nature of bread.
3. *Mustum*, which is grape juice that is either fresh or preserved by methods that suspend its fermentation without altering its nature (for example, freezing), is valid matter for the celebration of the Eucharist.

B. Communion under one species or with a minimal amount of wine

1. A layperson affected by celiac disease, who is not able to receive Communion under the species of bread, including low-gluten hosts, may receive Communion under the species of wine only.
2. A priest unable to receive Communion under the species of bread, including low-gluten hosts, when taking part in a concelebration, may with the permission of the Ordinary receive Communion under the species of wine only.
3. A priest unable to ingest even a minimal amount of wine, who finds himself in a situation where it is difficult to obtain or store mustum, when taking part in a concelebration, may with the permission of the Ordinary receive Communion under the species of bread only.
4. If a priest is able to take wine, but only a very small amount, when he is the sole celebrant, the remaining species of wine may be consumed by a layperson participating in that celebration of the Eucharist.

C. Common Norms

1. The Ordinary is competent to give permission for an individual priest or layperson to use low-gluten hosts or mustum for the celebration of the Eucharist. Permission can be granted habitually, for as long as the situation continues which occasioned the granting of permission.
2. When the principal celebrant at a concelebration has permission to use mustum, a chalice of normal wine is to be prepared for the concelebrants. In like manner, when he has permission to use low-gluten hosts, normal hosts are to be provided for the concelebrants.
3. A priest unable to receive Communion under the species of bread, including low-gluten hosts, may not celebrate the Eucharist individually, nor may he preside at a concelebration.
4. Given the centrality of the celebration of the Eucharist in the life of a priest, one must proceed with great caution before admitting to Holy Orders those candidates unable to ingest gluten or alcohol without serious harm.
5. Attention should be paid to medical advances in the area of celiac disease and alcoholism, and encouragement given to the production of hosts with a minimal amount of gluten and of unaltered mustum.
6. The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith enjoys competence over the doctrinal aspects of this question, while disciplinary matters are the competence of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments.
7. Concerned Episcopal Conferences shall report to the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, at the time of their *ad Limina* visit, regarding the application of these norms as well as any new developments in this area.

Asking you to kindly communicate the contents of this letter to the members of your Episcopal Conference, with fraternal regards and prayerful best wishes, I am

Sincerely yours in Christ,
✠ Joseph Card. Ratzinger
Prefect

“Bread of Life and Cup of Salvation”
Most Reverence Carl F. Mengeling
Bishop of Lansing
January 20, 2005

Office of Worship
517-342-2480

