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A Hospitable Table

Resources for Welcoming
Persons with
Celiac Sprue Disease

A Hospitable Table: Resources for Welcoming Persons with Celiac Sprue Disease

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❖ Introduction ❖

Over the course of the past year, the concerns of welcoming persons with Celiac Sprue disease to communion have come to the attention of some parishes. In response to this pastoral need, the Office of Worship provides the following information and resources to help parishes to accommodate those with this condition. In this way, pastors may discuss the information in this resource packet with their worship commissions. In addition, the information contained herein may help in educating the entire parish, particularly extraordinary ministers of communion.

What is Celiac Sprue?

Persons with Celiac Sprue disease are unable to properly digest gluten, a protein found in grains such as wheat, rye and barley. Gluten is not found in rice, corn or millet. Celiac Sprue is a genetic autoimmune disease. If a person receives a bit of gluten, it will affect the intestines and cause severe permanent damage to the individual's health. Most persons with Celiac Sprue must adopt a gluten-free diet in order to remain healthy.

Why are rice and corn wafers not allowed?

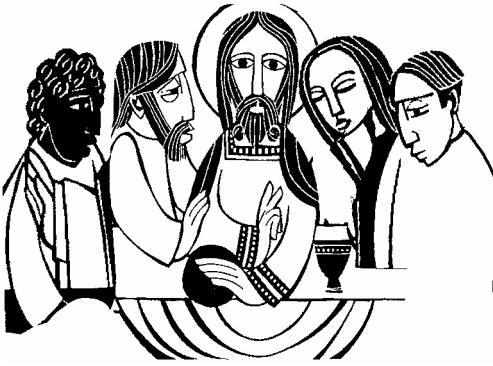
As you know, the Code of Canon Law, canon 924.4 requires that Eucharistic bread/hosts must contain only wheat and water. Though it has been reported in other (arch) dioceses that pastors, out of what they consider a pastoral necessity, will provide a rice wafer, this has led to severe pastoral consequences. Because rice wafers are invalid matter, the Communion is deemed invalid. Thus, much hurt from well-intentioned persons can occur in situations like this, if not properly handled. Thus, we hope this resource will help you in understanding and educating worship commissions, deacons, extraordinary ministers of Communion and the whole assembly.

Hope is not lost. The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, since 1980, has deemed completely gluten-free hosts invalid matter (see Appendix I). However, low-gluten hosts are able to be used as valid matter (see the Appendix III for sources where low-gluten hosts may be purchased). It is important that low-gluten hosts do not come into contact with the other hosts/bread. Those who cannot tolerate any gluten at all may receive only from the cup. Again, it is important that the cup or (Eucharistic) wine does not come into contact with even a particle of Eucharistic bread/hosts which are not low-gluten, especially at the commingling.

A model procedure for those with no tolerance for low-gluten hosts

Persons with Celiac Sprue must have a chalice from which they themselves only receive. They disinfect it at home, before the liturgy. The chalice is placed in a plastic Zip-Lock Bag and is brought to church. The chalice remains in the bag until it is filled with wine. Some distinction of the chalice is most appropriate so as not to confuse it with the other chalices on the altar-table. It is brought forward at the preparation of the gifts when the other chalices are brought forward. Care must be taken not to place a particle of the Eucharistic host/bread in that particular chalice. After the presider receives Communion and the ministers of Communion approach the altar-table, the person(s) with Celiac Sprue should approach as well. It would be helpful if persons with Celiac Sprue sit close to the front of the worship space. The presider, deacon or extraordinary minister of communion, following his/her own Communion, distributes the Blood of Christ to the persons with Celiac Sprue. The persons then go back to their seats.

Again, education is very important. Parish-wide catechesis on Celiac Sprue will afford a greater sense of hospitality and a more inclusive experience of liturgy for all involved. Moreover, education for those with Celiac Sprue allows them to know that the Church has procedures to facilitate their reception of Communion. Feel free to reprint the next page as an insert in your parish bulletin. The information contained in the bulletin insert is edited from this introduction.



A Hospitable Table: Welcoming Those with Celiac Sprue Disease

Introduction

Over the last 25 years, the Roman Catholic Church has addressed the concern of welcoming persons with Celiac Sprue disease to Communion. Still, much confusion abounds because few know what Celiac Sprue disease is or how the Church is addressing this disease.

What is Celiac Sprue?

Persons with Celiac Sprue disease are unable to properly digest gluten, a protein found in grains such as wheat, rye and barley. Gluten is not found in rice, corn or millet. Celiac Sprue is a genetic autoimmune disease. If a person receives a bit of gluten, it will affect the intestines and cause severe, permanent damage to the individual's health. Most persons with Celiac Sprue must adopt a gluten-free diet to remain healthy.

Why are rice and corn wafers not allowed?

The *Code of Canon Law*, in canon 924.4 requires that eucharistic bread/hosts must contain only wheat and water. 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. Thus, much hurt from well-intentioned persons can occur in situations like this, if not properly handled.

The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith has deemed completely *gluten-free* hosts invalid matter. However, *low-gluten* hosts are able to be used as valid matter. It is important that low-gluten hosts do not come into contact with the other hosts/bread. Those who cannot tolerate any gluten at all, often receive only from the cup, because they cannot even handle the .01% of gluten in the low-gluten hosts. Again, it is important that we do not judge those who only go to the cup. Also, the communion procession is not the time to try to "correct" or provide "catechesis" to those going only to the cup. It may simply mean that the person(s) has Celiac Sprue and worked out with the pastor a method of communing. Speak with the pastor after the liturgy.

A model procedure for those with no tolerance for low-gluten hosts.

Here is a preferred model for the Communion procession for those who are unable to receive any gluten. Persons with Celiac Sprue must have a chalice from which they themselves only receive. They disinfect it at home before the liturgy. The chalice is placed in a plastic Zip-Lock Bag and is brought to church. The chalice remains in the bag until it is filled with wine. Some distinction of the chalice is most appropriate so as not to confuse it with the other chalices on the altar-table. It is brought forward at the preparation of the gifts, when the other chalices are brought forward. Care must be taken not to place a particle of the Eucharistic host/bread in that particular chalice. After the presider receives Communion and the ministers of Communion approach the altar-table, the person(s) with Celiac Sprue should approach as well. It would be helpful if persons with Celiac Sprue sit close to the front of the worship space. The presider, deacon or extraordinary minister of Communion, following his/her own Communion, distributes the Blood of Christ to the persons with Celiac Sprue. The persons then go back to their seats.

Understanding the complexity of Celiac Sprue disease will afford a greater sense of hospitality and more inclusive experience of liturgy for all of us. If you have Celiac Sprue disease, please contact the pastor to discuss the best procedure.

❖ Appendix I ❖



CONGREGAZIONE
PER LA DOTTRINA
DELLA FEDE

89/78 – 17498

PROT. N. _____
(Si prega citare il numero nella risposta)

00120 Città del Vaticano,
Palazzo del S. Uffizio

July 24, 2003

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SEP 29 2003

OFFICE OF THE
GENERAL SECRETARY
USCCB

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 communione*, 29 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.

TO THEIR EXCELLENCIES
THE PRESIDENTS OF THE EPISCOPAL CONFERENCES

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.

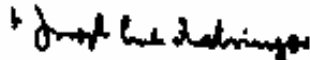
5. Attention should be paid to medical advances in the area of celiac disease and alcoholism, and encouragement given to the production of hosts with a minimal amount of gluten and of unaltered mustum.

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

❖ Appendix II ❖

Additional Resources

LOW-GLUTEN HOSTS

Congregation of Benedictine Sisters of Perpetual Adoration
Altar Breads Department
31970 State Highway P
Clyde Missouri 64432
Telephone: 1.800.223.2772
Email: altarbreads@benedictinesisters.org
S. Rita, OSB, Manager

MUSTUM

Ranelle Trading/Ojai Fresh Juice Corporations
2501 Oak Hill Circle, Suite 2032
Ft Worth TX 76109
Telephone: 877.211.7690 (toll free)
Email: mike@ojaifresh.com
Contact: Mr. Mike Ranelle, President

Mont La Salle Altar Wine Company
385 A La Fata Street
St Helena CA 94575
Telephone: 707.963.2521
Toll Free: 1.800.447.8466
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

Catholic Celiac Society
Telephone: 914.737.5291
Email: info@catholicceliacs.org
Contact: Chris Spreitzer

❖ Appendix III ❖

Resources for Those with Gluten and/or Alcohol Intolerance

Introduction

In recent years, pastors across the United States have received numerous questions from those afflicted with various manifestations of gluten intolerance, such as Celiac-Sprue disease, as well as alcohol intolerance in relation 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. As well, those who suffer from some form of alcohol intolerance are likewise restricted from receiving the Precious Blood as it is now offered at the Liturgy. An active dialogue with experts on both these conditions, as well as with various dicasteries of the Holy See, has now resulted in several new developments relative to the reception of Holy Communion for those with these conditions.

Gluten Intolerance and the Reception of Holy Communion

Those who suffer from gluten intolerance, especially that form of it 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 many doctors advise patients with this condition to adopt a totally gluten-free diet, others merely restrict gluten intake.

As a result, the common advice given to many Celiac Sprue and gluten-intolerant patients is to receive only the Precious Blood at Holy Communion. However, additional concerns can emerge when the Precious Blood has been “contaminated” with gluten at the co-mingling rite. As a result, the administration of the Precious Blood – whether under the form of wine or of mustum - to persons with these conditions must carefully take into account the need to avoid any mixing of the sacred species at the altar or a communion station.

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 in Clyde, Missouri, have developed a true low gluten host ready for sale by January 1, 2004. The total gluten content of this product is 0.01%; its contents of unleavened wheat and water and free of additives conform to the requirements of the Code of Canon Law, canon 924.2. This low gluten content is still enough gluten to confection 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. This product is the only true, low-gluten altar bread known to the Secretariat and approved for use at Mass in the United States. The contact information for ordering such hosts from the Benedictine Sisters of Perpetual Adoration is as follows:

Congregation of Benedictine Sisters of Perpetual Adoration
Altar Breads Department
31970 State Highway P
Clyde, Missouri 64432
Phone: 1-800-223-2772
e-mail: altarbreads@benedictinesisters.org
Sr. Rita, OSB, Manager

Alcohol Intolerance and the Reception of Holy Communion

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. “Mustum” proper 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. Mustum may be stored through freezing or other means; any pasteurized grape juice product, including pasteurized mustum, is invalid matter for Mass due to the fact that the high temperatures used in such a process evaporate all of the remaining alcohol in the juice.

A Short Introduction to Holy Communion and Celiac Sprue Disease

1. What is Celiac Sprue disease?

In recent years, many have worked to foster an increasing awareness of the significant effects of Celiac Sprue disease on people's lives. The digestive system of those with this condition is considerably compromised by the consumption of gluten, one of the major ingredients in wheat flour. It is estimated that as many as fifteen percent of all persons of northern European origin are affected by this disease to some degree.

2. How does this affect those who go to Holy Communion?

This is a particular challenge to Catholics, who believe that the celebration of the Holy Eucharist and the reception of Holy Communion are the very source and summit of the Christian life. Priests should show great pastoral sensitivity and compassion to anyone afflicted with this disease, but especially to the parents of children with a gluten intolerance at the time of their first Holy Communion.

3. Can low gluten hosts be used at Mass?

The Secretariat for the Liturgy of the U.S. Bishops' Conference has devoted considerable resources to this question for the last seven years. Within the past year, the Secretariat has successfully assisted the Congregation of Benedictine Sisters of Perpetual Adoration in Clyde Missouri in the production of a very low-gluten host which has been favorably reviewed by the publication *Gluten-Free Living* as "perfectly safe"¹ for sufferers of Celiac Sprue disease.

4. Where can I buy these low gluten hosts?

Low gluten altar hosts are available from: the Congregation of Benedictine Sisters of Perpetual Adoration, Altar Breads Department, 31970 State Highway P, Clyde, Missouri 64432 (Phone: 1-800-223-2772, e-mail: altarbreads@benedictinesisters.org).

5. What if a person cannot consume low gluten hosts?

Such communicants may still receive the Precious Blood. Catholics believe that whoever receives Holy Communion only under the form of bread or only under the form of wine still receives the whole Christ, in his Body and Blood, soul and divinity.

6. What about people who cannot receive low gluten hosts and cannot receive even a small amount of consecrated wine?

In such cases, the bishop may grant permission for individuals to receive *mustum*, a type of wine with a minimal alcohol content. If an individual is unable to tolerate *mustum*, there is little else the Church can do except to recommend that the person make a "spiritual communion." Why? Because the Church believes that it is impossible to consecrate anything except wheat bread and grape wine. From the time that the Lord Jesus took bread and wine and told his disciples "Do **this** in memory of me," the Roman Catholic Church has tried faithfully to fulfill Christ's command by taking unleavened bread made from water and wheat flour, and wine made from grapes for use at the Eucharist.

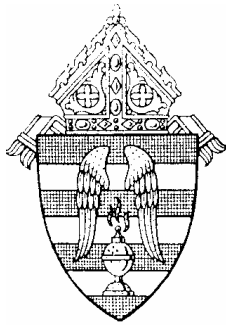
7. Can a priest or bishop change this teaching and consecrate a host made of rice?

No. It is impossible to consecrate a host made of something other than wheat and water. No priest or bishop can change this longstanding teaching of the Catholic Church. A little over a year ago, Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, once again took up this question on behalf of the Holy Father when he wrote: "Hosts that are *completely* gluten-free are invalid matter for the celebration of the Eucharist."²

¹ See Ann Whelan's "Make Your Own Decision" in *Gluten-Free Living* (vol. 9, no. 1), p. 4. In this same issue, see also Sr. Jeanne Crowe's extensive review article on the low gluten host, "Catholic Celiacs Can Now Receive Communion", pp.3ff.

² Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, circular letter to the Presidents of Conferences of Bishops, July 24, 2003 (Prot. 89/78-174/98) in *BCL Newsletter*, November 2003 (Vol. XXXIX), p. 45.





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2004**