

THE TABLE OF PLENTY

Pastoral Guidelines from the Diocese of Baton Rouge
for those who suffer with forms
of Gluten Intolerance and Alcohol Intolerance
and for those who minister to them.

Most Rev. Robert W. Muench
Bishop of Baton Rouge
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INTRODUCTION

A significant pastoral issue for both pastors and parishioners in our diocese is how to best address the needs of those afflicted with the various expressions of gluten intolerance, such as Celiac Sprue disease. These needs can cluster around the ability to receive Holy Communion and how a parish can pastorally and responsibly respond. There are many persons who, being gluten intolerant, cannot ingest wheat flour usually used in the preparation of communion bread wafers in the United States.

These Guidelines are being offered to you so that those who suffer with this disease can be ministered to with compassion and hope.

QUESTIONS

What is Celiac Disease or gluten intolerance?

Celiac Disease is also known as nontropical sprue or gluten sensitive enteropathy. It is a digestive disease that causes damage to the small intestine which interferes with the absorption of food nutrients. Persons with gluten intolerance cannot tolerate a protein called “gluten” which is found in items commonly used for making bread: wheat, rye, barley.

Persons who have gluten intolerance and who eat food containing gluten causes their immune system to damage the small intestine. Within the small intestine there are thousands of finger-like protrusions called “villi”. Nutrients from food are absorbed into the bloodstream through their villi. Without villi, a person will become malnourished no matter the amount of food ingested.

Celiac disease is considered an auto-immune disorder, as the body's own immune system causes the damage. Celiac disease is a genetic disease. This means it can be manifested in other members of the same family. The disease can sometimes be triggered-activates for the first time- after surgery, pregnancy, childbirth, viral infection, severe stress.

Is there any treatment?

Those who suffer from gluten intolerance, especially the intolerance in the form of Celiac Sprue, may react differently to varying amounts of gluten contained in wheat bread and other products with gluten within them.

Medical opinions as to best treatment practices vary. Many doctors advise patients with this condition to adopt a totally gluten free diet.

Other doctors restrict gluten intake. It could be said that all doctors agree that a patient must adopt a special restrictive diet for a lifetime. For some patients, improvement cannot happen on a gluten-free diet alone. Some patient's intestines are so damaged that they need intravenous nutrient supplements.

Drug regimens are currently being evaluated. Careful treatment is critical as patients with this disease could develop complications such as cancer, anemia, seizures and osteoporosis.

Is it possible for a person with gluten intolerance to receive Holy Communion?

It is commonly advised that a person with Celiac Disease and other gluten intolerance diseases to receive only the Consecrated Blood of Christ at Holy Communion. However, even receiving the Precious Blood—under the form of wine or mustum—has to be carefully administered to the person who suffers from this condition.

Concerns can become evident if the Consecrated Blood of Christ has become intermingled or “contaminated” with gluten during the Fraction and commingling rite, i.e., when the priest places a small piece of the host into the chalice. Thus, a separate vessel of wine or mustum must be reserved for the gluten intolerant communicant. Vessels at the altar or at a Communion station must not be confused. It may be necessary to have the one offering the chalice to the person with gluten intolerance to not have had any contact with the consecrated host before serving the chalice.

Alcohol Intolerance and Receiving Holy Communion

Some people cannot tolerate alcohol. Their biological system cannot absorb alcohol into the body, particularly the liver. The person may suffer from the disease of alcoholism. Those unable to consume alcohol, e.g., the laity, deacons, priests, may substitute mustum for regular wine in the reception of Holy Communion with the necessary permission.

What is Mustum?

Mustum is grape juice with very low alcohol content [less than 1.0%] because the fermentation process has been arrested briefly

after its start. Mustum is grape juice with no additives and is not pasteurized. Mustum is either fresh or it may be preserved by methods that suspend fermentation without altering its nature. An example would be “freezing.”

What does the Catholic Church say about the necessary valid matter needed for the Eucharist?

In other words, what does The Church require for the host and wine to be able to be considered Holy Communion? Church law, called Canon Law, requires that the bread or hosts for Communion contain only wheat and water. This is found in Canon Law 924:4 in the Code of Canon Law. The authoritative Catholic Church body that oversees questions regarding Church belief, called the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, has determined that a completely gluten –free host is not valid [invalid] for the sacrament of the Eucharist. The Congregation did determine that a low-gluten host is acceptable, valid matter for the Eucharist. The Congregation also ruled that mustum is valid for the celebration of the Eucharist. [Prot.N. 89/78-17498]

A copy of that determination is included with these Guidelines.

What about using other kinds of flour for Communion hosts?

Can the Communion bread or wafer be made of rice or potato flour? **No.** Communion bread made without any gluten is not considered valid for the reception of Holy Communion.

Pastors who are operating out of compassion and trying to assist a person with gluten intolerance may in the past have substituted the wheat host for a rice host or potato flour host.

However, this is not allowed under any circumstances. For Holy Communion to be valid there must be some gluten, even if that amount of gluten is minute.

So, how can a person who suffers from gluten intolerance, Celiac Disease, receive Holy Communion?

A person who is afflicted with Celiac Disease or other forms of gluten intolerance, who is not able to receive Holy Communion under the form of a low-gluten host, [a species of wheat bread] may receive Holy Communion under the species or form of wine only.

What if a priest is the one who suffers from gluten or alcohol intolerance? How does he receive Holy Communion?

A priest normally receives the Body and the Blood of Christ under the forms of bread and wine. (Cf. General Instruction of the Roman Missal, 244-249)

A priest unable to receive Communion under the species of bread, including low-gluten hosts, may, with permission of the Bishop, receive Communion under the species of wine only. If a priest is unable to ingest even a minimal amount of wine, and who is not able to obtain or store mustum, may with the bishop's permission, receive Holy Communion under the species of bread only.

If a priest who is the main presiding celebrant is able to ingest only a small amount of consecrated wine, the remaining consecrated wine may be consumed by concelebrating priests, a deacon or a lay person participating at that celebration of the Eucharist.

Bishop Muench has granted permission for an individual priest or layperson to use low-gluten hosts or mustum for the celebration of the Eucharist.

Where can I find low-gluten hosts?

In the recent past, low gluten hosts were only available from suppliers outside of the United States. There are as of 2013 two approved suppliers of low gluten hosts. The Benedictine Sisters of Perpetual Adoration in Clyde Missouri have developed a truly low-gluten host which has been sold in the United States since 2004. This host contains 37 micrograms of gluten and appears slightly yellow...it varies in size and has the appearance of a “bubbly chip.”

The second supplier is from Parish Crossroads, Zionsville, Indiana. This low gluten host is also approved for use by the USCCB. Total gluten content for hosts from either supplier is 0.01%. These hosts contain unleavened wheat and water only. These hosts are free of additives. These low gluten hosts conform to the requirements of the Code of Canon Law (Canon 942: 2) These hosts contain enough gluten to be considered “bread” for the Eucharist.

While it may be possible for persons with gluten intolerance to consume this particular low gluten host, or some portion of it, any person doing so with gluten intolerance should check with his/her personal physician before doing so.

What can be offered to someone who exists on a totally gluten free diet and who wants to receive Communion?

If a person cannot tolerate gluten of any amount, s/he can receive from the Chalice.

Should this kind of low-gluten hosts be handled differently than the other hosts?

Yes. It is important that low-gluten hosts NOT come in contact with other hosts used for Communion.

A PROPOSED PROCEDURE FOR MASS: PERSONS WITH GLUTEN INTOLERANCE AND ALCOHOL INTOLERANCE

If it is known that communicants who suffer from either of these diseases, the following is suggested: As a routine, order a small supply of low –gluten hosts and/or mustum.

Information about recommended suppliers is included in these Guidelines.

Both low gluten hosts and mustum are somewhat fragile in terms of their shelf-life. Thus, only order in small quantities. Keep the low gluten hosts separate from the regular hosts. Label the container. Replenish the supply when needed, again because of the shelf-life issues. A small amount of mustum can be kept, refrigerated after it is opened.

BEFORE THE LITURGY

A person with Celiac Disease or other gluten intolerance diseases or alcohol intolerance are advised to go to the sacristy BEFORE Mass begins and identify oneself to the Priest Presider and/ or Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion. It is recommended that the person have a usual place for seating within the Assembly, preferably near the front so that they can begin the Communion procession.

This could be determined in collaboration with the person and the priest-presider. Care must be taken that the low gluten host NOT be contaminated by contact with the ordinary hosts.

DURING THE PRESENTATION OF GIFTS

The low gluten host is to be placed in a pyx. A small amount of the mustum is to be placed in a special chalice, distinguishable from the other chalices.

Either the pyx or chalice [or both] is brought forward at the Presentation of Gifts. The low gluten host and the mustum 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 Table with the other chalices of wine, uncovered.

AT THE FRACTION RITE

The Priest-Presider must be careful NOT to handle the low gluten host after he has handled large quantities of wheat bread hosts, as he would be doing during the Fraction Rite of the Mass. It may be that an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion, who by virtue of his/her role at mass has not participated in the Fraction Rite, can pick up the pyx and distribute Communion to the person who suffers from gluten intolerance to prevent cross-contamination

IF A PERSON HAS ZERO TOLERANCE FOR GLUTEN IS AT MASS:

Here is a suggested procedure, which is adaptable, if a parishioner or guest has zero tolerance for gluten. A person with zero tolerance must have a chalice from which only THAT PERSON receives communion. This chalice can be purchased by the person

[with the help of the parish in determining the type/or is provided by the parish]. The person with zero tolerance disinfects the chalice

AT HOME before the Mass. The chalice is brought to church by the person with zero gluten tolerance in a zip lock type plastic bag. The chalice remains in this plastic bag until it is filled with wine before Mass. The person putting wine into this chalice could be the person with zero tolerance or someone who has made certain that his/her hands have not been contaminated by touching or holding the ordinary wheat hosts. Some distinction of the chalice is crucial so as not to confuse it with the other chalices on the altar. This chalice is brought forward with the other gifts during the Presentation of Gifts. During the Fraction Rite, NO particle from the Eucharistic Bread is placed in the chalice for the person with zero gluten tolerance. The Priest-president, deacon or Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion, following his/her own Communion, distributes the Blood of Christ to the person(s) with zero gluten tolerance. It is recommended that the person with zero tolerance receive from this chalice FIRST so as to minimize cross-contamination. The person with zero tolerance returns to his/her seat.

AFTER MASS: The person with zero tolerance receives the chalice back from the priest or deacon once it has been purified for use the next time.

SUPPLIERS

LOW GLUTEN HOSTS

Congregation of Benedictine Sisters of Perpetual Adoration
Altar Breads Department
31970 State Highway P
Clyde, Missouri 64432-800-223-2772a
ltarbreads@benedictinesisters.org

Parish Crossroads
Box 4213
Kokomo, Indiana 46904
1-800-501-8842
www.parishcrossroads.com

MUSTUM

Ranelle Trading/Ojai Fresh Juice Corporation
2501 Oak hill Circle, Suite 2032
Fort Wayne, Texas 76109
1-877-211-7690
mike@ojaifresh.com

Mount La Sale Altar Wine Company
385 a La Fata Street
St. Helena, California 94575
1-707-963-2521
1-800-447-8466

COMMUNITIES & ADVOCACY

CELIAC DISEASE FOUNDATION OF LOUISIANA

www.glutenfreeworks.com

CELIAC DISEASE FOUNDATION

13251 Ventura Blvd.

Suite 1

Studio City, California 91604-1838

1-818-990-2354

www.celiac.org

CATHOLIC CELIAC SOCIETY

www.info@catholicceliacs.org

1-914-737-5291

UNITED STATES CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS

www.usccb.org

Bishop's Committee on Divine Worship newsletter,
November 2003, pg. 39

A FINAL WORD

Persons with gluten intolerance and/or alcohol intolerance suffer a good deal from their disease. Already they may sense some alienation from food, events and personal contact which could affect their quality of living.

Compassion and pastoral care are required in helping persons with these diseases to experience a welcome to the Table of the Lord. Do not judge those who only receive from the Communion Chalice.

Do not use the Communion Procession as the time to “catechize” someone about receiving only from the Communion Chalice or not receiving from the consecrated Host. Conversation can always be had after the Liturgy. The Communion procession is not the catechetical moment.

Help the parish better understand the implications of both gluten and alcohol intolerance. Particularly take time to instruct procedures for Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion.

The better understood, the better a sense of hospitality and reverence for all who worship can occur. Then there can be a more inclusive experience of the liturgy for all who participate.

If you are a person who suffers from gluten intolerance in any form or alcohol intolerance please make an appointment outside of Mass to talk with your pastor to discuss the best procedure. Your pastor wants to understand and help you the best way possible.

RESOURCES

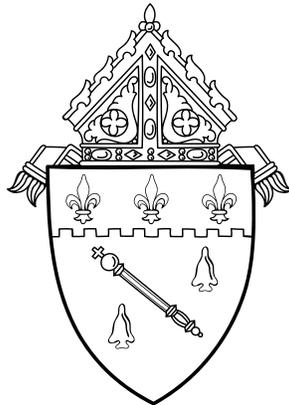
Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith
Rescriptum, 15 December 1980, in *Leges Ecclesiae*, 6/4819.
8095-8096

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

Bishop’s Committee on the Liturgy Newsletter, November 2003,
pg. 39, USCCB.org

*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.*

Diocese of Lansing, Michigan,
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Mrs. Rita Thiron,
January 2005.



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