

Information Regarding the Reception of Holy Communion for those who have Celiac Disease

According to Canon 912, ***“Any baptized person not prohibited by law can and must be admitted to Holy Communion.”***

It is imperative for pastors to make every effort to accommodate and normalize the experience of Communion for the faithful, including those suffering from celiac disease.

In 2003, the teaching on the use of low-gluten hosts at Mass was addressed by the then Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger. He reminded pastors and the faithful that for bread to be valid matter for the Eucharist, it must be made solely of wheat, contain enough gluten to effect the confection of bread, be free of foreign materials, and unaffected by any preparation or baking methods which would alter its nature. The amount of gluten necessary for validity in such bread is not determined by minimum percentage or weight, though hosts which have no gluten are considered invalid matter for Mass. (Committee on Divine Worship Newsletter, October 2012 and updated April 2016)

In 2017 Pope Francis reaffirmed that hosts with no gluten were invalid matter for Mass.

Being a hospitable and compassionate community, parishes that have parishioners who cannot receive hosts with regular amounts of gluten for Holy Communion can consider the following procedures for them, always keeping in mind that each parish can develop their own procedures reflective of these:

Here at St. Joan of Arc Parish, we are happy to continue our practice of providing ***low gluten hosts*** for these parishioners. These parishioners will need to consult with their doctors about the amount of gluten in the host and whether it will cause a reaction to the gluten.

Parishioners needing a low gluten host should go to the sacristy no later than 10 minutes before the Mass begins and request one from the priest or Mass Captain. He/she will then place a low gluten host in a special pyx with a lid so that they will not be contaminated by gluten particles from the other hosts. The hosts in this pyx are placed on the altar and consecrated during the Eucharistic Prayer. When it is time for Communion, the persons needing the low gluten hosts must go to the main celebrant, who will have the special pyx attached to the ciborium he is holding. Upon approaching the priest, the communicant makes the gesture of touching their lips with their second and third fingers to alert the priest, who will then use his other hand to distribute the low gluten hosts, thus avoiding any contamination from the other hosts. After receiving the host, the recipient follows the standard procedure of stepping to the side, lowering his/her mask and immediately consuming the host. No one may walk away with the host as if to receive it back in their pew. Also, the low gluten host may only be received in the hand and not on the tongue.

Should a parishioner be unable to receive Holy Communion using the low gluten host, then they should be encouraged to pray the Spiritual Communion Prayer:

*My Jesus, I believe that You are present in the Most Holy Sacrament.
I love You above all things, and I desire to receive You into my soul.
Since I cannot at this moment receive You sacramentally,
come at least spiritually into my heart.
I embrace You as if You were already there and unite myself wholly to You.
Never permit me to be separated from You. Amen.*