

HOLY COMMUNION FOR THOSE WITH GLUTEN INTOLERANCE

What does the Catholic Church say about the use of low-gluten hosts?

According to tradition, Jesus used unleavened *wheat* bread at the Last Supper. This tradition was confirmed in 2003 in an official letter from the Vatican regarding the use of low-gluten hosts. Because of the need for bread used for consecration to consist of only wheat and water, the low-gluten option uses wheat *starch* and water. Wheat starch is processed to remove the gluten; it is considered gluten-free and has been used in gluten-free products in Europe for decades. The altar breads we will be using at St. Francis Borgia parish, made by the Benedictine Sisters of Perpetual Adoration, are verified to contain <10 ppm (parts per million) gluten, or <0.001%. (Gluten-free is defined by the FDA as a product containing <20 ppm gluten.) Most individuals with celiac disease should be able to consume low-gluten hosts at Mass without adverse effects however you know what you can tolerate. Consider consulting your physician if there is any question.

Can I still receive only the Precious Blood?

Yes. You are welcome to receive only the Precious Blood from the communal cup during Communion as you may have in the past, either alone or in combination with reception of the low-gluten host. You know your tolerance level and should consider your individual ability to handle the potential for cross-contamination from individuals who receive the traditional host and then sip from the communal cup.

I feel left out because I can't receive the same way as others at Mass.

It is normal to feel isolated when something different is required from everyone else. As Catholics, however, we believe that each species of the Eucharist contains all of its elements (body, blood, soul, and divinity). Thus, by receiving only the Body of Christ or only the Precious Blood, we still receive the fullness of the sacrament.

Why can't someone with celiac disease consume the host? Don't we believe that it has become the Body of Christ rather than bread?

The Fourth Lateran Council in 1215 clarified the Catholic belief about the Real Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist. Each object has both *substance* and *accidents*. The substance is what it truly is while the accidents, such as taste, color, and texture, can vary. During the Consecration, the substance of the bread becomes Christ's body and blood, but the accidents remain unchanged. Thus, if bread contains gluten before consecration, it also contains gluten after.

Unfortunately, none of these options will work for me. What can I do?

Our hope is that all parishioners will be able to receive Holy Communion sacramentally. However, making a spiritual Communion during Mass in lieu of a sacramental Communion might still be necessary at times due to your personal health restrictions or when visiting another parish.