



Celiac Disease, Alcohol Intolerance, and the USCCB - Catholic Church's Pastoral Response

Celiac disease is an immune reaction to eating gluten (a protein found in wheat, barley and rye). For those with the disease, eating gluten triggers an immune response in the small intestine. Over time, this immune reaction damages the small intestine's lining and hinders absorption of some vital nutrients and often causes stomach pain, diarrhea, and weight loss.

Given the serious health risk for those suffering gluten intolerance, it is important for pastors and other Church leaders not only to be aware of the reality, but to be prepared to address the situation of Catholics with celiac disease, who come to parishes and seek to receive Communion.

The Risk of "*Cross-Contamination*"

For some members of the faithful with gluten intolerance, even trace amounts of gluten can be damaging. It is important, therefore, to be mindful of the potential of "cross-contamination" when using either low-gluten hosts or when offering Holy Communion to someone only under the species of consecrated wine. It is best for the communicant or sacristan to prepare a pyx with the low-gluten host before Mass. At Communion time then, they can approach the Ordinary or Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion and receive Communion from the segregated pyx.

The lay faithful who are not able to receive Holy Communion at all under the species of bread, even of low-gluten hosts, may receive Holy Communion under the species of consecrated wine (Precious Blood) only.

It is worthy to recall that, through the Doctrine of Concomitance, the Catholic Church teaches that receiving Holy Communion under either species of consecrated bread or wine, the whole of Christ is received (cf. *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, no. 282; *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 1390). Thus, the faithful should be confident they are receiving the fullness of graces and in Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist they receive, even when only one Eucharistic specie is consumed.

Before the Mass starts, individuals are asked to please inform the Mass Sacristan, Priest or Deacon if they request a low-glutton Communion Host for consumption during the Mass.

Low-glutton hosts to be consecrated during the Mass are placed in a single, brass, special metal, pyx. The correct number of non-glutton hosts are placed in the device, the cover lid placed on it and the entire device is then placed on the credence table; to be brought forward later with the other Communion vessels by the Altar Server/s, deacon or presider during the preparation of the altar for the Mass Liturgy of the Eucharist and later consecration.

At the end of the Mass, once the device has been purified by a member of the clergy, it is free to be washed with soap and warm water, and returned to the sacristy cabinet for future use.