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Statement by the National Conference of Catholic bishops on the use of low gluten hosts at Mass

In the November 2003

BCL Newsletter...

The Use of Mustum and Low-Gluten Hosts at Mass

The Secretariat for the Liturgy has increasingly received from bishops and pastors inquiries regarding priests, deacons and the faithful who are unable to consume consecrated wheat hosts or consecrated wine at Mass. Over the last twenty years, both the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments and the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith have frequently addressed the special needs of such people in their reception of Holy Communion. As recently as June 19, 1995 (Prot.N. 89/78) Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, wrote to all presidents of Episcopal Conferences regarding the use of mustum and low-gluten hosts for priests, deacons and the faithful in the celebration of Mass.

On July 24, 2003 (Prot.N. 98/78-17498), Cardinal Ratzinger again took up the topic of the use of mustum and low-gluten hosts at Mass in a second letter, also addressed to the presidents of Episcopal Conferences and included below for our readers. In it the Prefect restates essential Church teaching regarding valid matter for the Eucharist, and lays out new norms for the use of mustum and low-gluten hosts. Pastors and the faithful are reminded 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. In the Roman Rite, the bread prepared for the Eucharist must also be unleavened.

In the same letter, the Prefect also restates that mustum is grape juice in which fermentation has begun, but has been suspended with the result that its alcohol content does not reach the levels found in most table wines. The process used for the suspension of fermentation must not alter the nature of the juice in any way. As with gluten in bread, so also the amount of alcohol needed for validity in mustum is not determined by a minimum percentage or weight. As well, pasteurized grape juice in which all alcohol has been evaporated through high temperature preparations is invalid matter for Mass.

The balance of Cardinal Ratzinger's letter regards the conditions under which low-gluten hosts and mustum may be used by different groups. There are two regulations of significance for the lay faithful, in particular. The first is that the lay faithful who are not able to receive Holy Communion at all under the species of bread, even of low-gluten hosts, may indeed receive Holy Communion under the species of wine only. The

Bishops' Committee on the Liturgy has earlier reminded pastors (BCL Newsletter, April-May, 2000) of the right of the faithful under the law (CIC, canon 843) to receive Holy Communion, even if only the Precious Blood, and regardless of whether the Precious Blood is offered to the rest of the faithful present at a given celebration of Mass.

The second regulation of note regards the granting of permission for the use of low-gluten hosts and mustum by priests, deacons or the lay faithful. In his previous letter, Cardinal Ratzinger had stated that only the Holy See itself, through the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, could give permission for the lay faithful to use mustum. Permission for priests, deacons and the lay faithful to use low-gluten hosts was under the competence of the local Ordinary. However, in the July 24, 2003 letter, permission for priests, deacons or the lay faithful without distinction to use mustum or low-gluten hosts is now within the competence of the local Ordinary. The authority to permit the lay faithful to use mustum and low-gluten hosts in the reception of Holy Communion may be delegated to pastors under CIC (Codes Iuris Canonici), canon 137.1. This provision will relieve Ordinaries of the burden of processing what could be many such requests. Medical certification of a condition justifying the use of mustum or low-gluten hosts for Holy Communion is no longer required. Such permission, once granted, stands for as long as the condition persists which occasioned the request for the original permission.

As a final note, it is important to recall that through the doctrine of concomitance the Church teaches that under either species of 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; Council of Trent, session 21, *Doctrina de communione sub utraque specie et parvulorum*, 16 July 1562, chapters 1-3: Denzinger –Schonmetzer, 1725-1729). In view of this important belief, the faithful may be encouraged to approach their pastors, seeking the special permissions required for Holy Communion under the species of wine alone, or by the use of either mustum or low-gluten hosts, and to be confident in the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist they receive.

Congregation for Doctrine of the Faith

July 24, 2003

Prot. 89/78-174 98

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 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.
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 alcoholism⁴ 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 Cardinal Ratzinger
Prefect

Chart on the Use of Mustum, Low-Gluten Hosts or Wine Alone at Mass by Priests, Deacons and the Lay Faithful

The following chart, developed by the Secretariat for the Liturgy, provides a ready reference for identifying the options for the reception of Holy Communion under the forms of mustum, low-gluten hosts or wine alone by priests, deacons and the lay faithful afflicted with gluten and/or alcohol intolerance. As indicated below, priests should note the ways in which a condition of gluten or alcohol intolerance may affect not only their reception of Holy Communion, but also their roles as celebrants and concelebrants. Priests are reminded that the permission of their Ordinary is required for the alterations

in their roles as celebrants or concelebrants described in the chart below. Deacons and the lay faithful must seek individual permissions, as noted above, for the use of low-gluten hosts or mustum.

Options for those who suffer from gluten intolerance Options for those who suffer from alcohol intolerance Options for those who suffer from both gluten and alcohol intolerance

1 Deacons and Lay Faithful -may receive a small amount of a regular host; or

-may use a low-gluten host; or

-may receive under the form of wine only. -may receive a small amount under the form of wine; or

-may receive under the form of bread only; or

-may use mustum. -may take a small amount of a regular host; or

-may take a small amount under the form of wine; or

-may use a low-gluten host and mustum.

2 Priest as Sole Celebrant *

*The priest celebrant must always receive Holy Communion under both forms. -may take a small amount of a regular host; or

-may use a low-gluten host. Otherwise, he may not celebrate Eucharist individually. -may take a small amount under the form of wine; or

-may use mustum.

* If the priest is able to take only a small amount of wine, then what remains may be consumed by a layperson. -may take a small amount of a regular host and may take a small amount under the form of wine; or

-may use a low-gluten host and mustum.

Otherwise, he may not celebrate Eucharist individually.

3 Priest as Principal Celebrant at a Concelebrated Mass*

*The priest celebrant must always receive Holy Communion under both forms. -may take a small amount of a regular host; or

-may use a low-gluten host for himself alone. Other concelebrants should consume regular hosts.

Otherwise, he may not preside at concelebration. -may take a small amount under the form of wine; or

-may use mustum for himself alone. Other concelebrants should use regular wine. -may take a small amount of a regular host and may take a small amount under the form of wine; or

-may use a low- gluten host and mustum for himself alone. Other concelebrants should use regular bread and wine.

Otherwise, he may not preside at concelebration.

4 Priest as Concelebrant -may take a small amount of a regular host; or

-may use a low-gluten host; or

-if unable to use a low-gluten host, then may receive under the form of wine only. -may take a small amount under the form of wine; or

-may use mustum; or

-if mustum is not available, then may receive under the form of bread only. -may take a small amount of a regular host; or

-may take a small amount under the form of wine; or

-may use a low-gluten host and/or mustum.

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 suffers 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 confect 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.

There are only two suppliers in the United States known to the Secretariat for the Liturgy of mustum approved for use at Mass. Their contact information is given here:

(1) Ranelle Trading/Ojai Fresh Juice Corporation
2501 Oak Hill Circle, Suite 2032
Ft. Worth, TX 76109
Phone: 877-211-7690 (toll free)

E-mail: mike@ojaifresh.com
Contact: Mr. Mike Ranelle, President

and

(2) Mont La Salle Altar Wine Company
385 A La Fata Street
St. Helena, Ca. 94575
Phone: 707-963-2521
Toll Free: 800-447-8466
Contact: Mr. James Cox, President

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