

**STATEMENT REGARDING "On the bread and wine for the Eucharist" LETTER SENT BY VATICAN AND MADE PUBLIC JULY 8, 2017**

(CLYDE, Mo.) - The Benedictine Sisters of Perpetual Adoration in Clyde, Missouri, have made Vatican-approved, low-gluten altar breads since 2004. These breads have been tested by independent laboratories and deemed safe for use by many people with Celiac Sprue Disease.

The Benedictine Sisters of Perpetual Adoration were the first U.S. low-gluten altar bread producers approved by the Vatican. As early as the 1990s, the Benedictine Sisters started receiving requests for gluten-free hosts. With support from the Office of Divine Worship of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, the Benedictine Sisters produced a host compliant with the requirements of Canon Law and suitable for thousands of low-gluten customers around the world. These sales began in 2004, and the wafers have been approved by the USCCB for use in all U.S. dioceses.

The Benedictine Sisters are the largest religious producers of altar breads in the United States, making almost 9 million hosts each month. The low-gluten breads are produced in a separate facility in order to prevent cross-contamination. The low-gluten breads are made from water and wheat starch that has had most of the gluten removed.

In 2004 Dr. Alessio Fasano, at the time director of the the Center for Celiac Research at the University of Maryland\*, maintained that the amount of gluten contained in one of the Benedictine Sisters' low-gluten altar breads (tested at < .01 percent) was so minute that someone diagnosed with Celiac Sprue Disease would have to consume 270 wafers daily in order to reach the danger point. A test done in 2016 indicated the gluten content was even more minimal - less than .001 percent.

There are some people who are so sensitive to gluten that even the tiniest amount can cause discomfort. The Benedictine Sisters follow the recommendation set forth by the USCCB that those with such a serious gluten sensitivity discuss their condition with their pastor or Eucharistic minister. If the parish offers a separate chalice for Celiac sufferers, he or she may partake only of the Blood of Christ. It's best to avoid chalices that are used by those digesting regular altar breads because cross-contamination may occur.

More information about the Benedictine Sisters' low-gluten breads can be found at <https://altarbreadsbpa.com/low-gluten-use-storage/>.

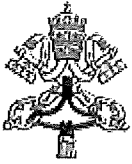
*\*Dr. Fasano is now with the Center for Celiac Research and Treatment at Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston.*

**For more information, please contact one of the following:**

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CONGREGATION FOR DIVINE WORSHIP  
AND THE DISCIPLINE OF THE SACRAMENTS

Prot. N. 320/17

**Circular letter to Bishops  
on the bread and wine for the Eucharist**

1. At the request of the Holy Father, Pope Francis, the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments is writing to Diocesan Bishops (and to those who are their equivalents in law) to remind them that it falls to them above all to duly provide for all that is required for the celebration of the Lord's Supper (cf. Lk 22: 8,13). It is for the Bishop as principal dispenser of the mysteries of God, moderator, promoter and guardian of the liturgical life in the Church entrusted to his care (Cf. CIC can. 835 § 1), to watch over the quality of the bread and wine to be used at the Eucharist and also those who prepare these materials. In order to be of assistance we recall the existing regulations and offer some practical suggestions.

2. Until recently it was certain religious communities who took care of baking the bread and making the wine for the celebration of the Eucharist. Today, however, these materials are also sold in supermarkets and other stores and even over the internet. In order to remove any doubt about the validity of the matter for the Eucharist, this Dicastery suggests that Ordinaries should give guidance in this regard by, for example, guaranteeing the Eucharistic matter through special certification.

The Ordinary is bound to remind priests, especially parish priests and rectors of churches, of their responsibility to verify those who provide the bread and wine for the celebration and the worthiness of the material.

It is also for the Ordinary to provide information to the producers of the bread and wine for the Eucharist and to remind them of the absolute respect that is due to the norms.

3. The norms about the Eucharistic matter are given in can. 924 of the CIC and in numbers 319 – 323 of the *Institutio generalis Missalis Romani* and have already been explained in the Instruction *Redemptionis Sacramentum* issued by this Congregation (25 March 2004):

a) "The bread used in the celebration of the Most Holy Eucharistic Sacrifice must be unleavened, purely of wheat, and recently made so that there is no danger of decomposition. It follows therefore that bread made from another substance, even if it is grain, or if it is mixed with another substance different from wheat to such an extent that it would not commonly be considered wheat bread, does not constitute valid matter for confecting the Sacrifice and the Eucharistic Sacrament. It is a grave abuse to introduce other substances, such as fruit or sugar or honey, into the bread for confecting the Eucharist. Hosts should obviously be made by those who are not only distinguished by their integrity, but also skilled in making them and furnished with suitable tools" (n. 48).

b) “The wine that is used in the most sacred celebration of the Eucharistic Sacrifice must be natural, from the fruit of the grape, pure and incorrupt, not mixed with other substances. [...] Great care should be taken so that the wine intended for the celebration of the Eucharist is well conserved and has not soured. It is altogether forbidden to use wine of doubtful authenticity or provenance, for the Church requires certainty regarding the conditions necessary for the validity of the sacraments. Nor are other drinks of any kind to be admitted for any reason, as they do not constitute valid matter” (n. 50).

4. In its Circular Letter to the Presidents of the Episcopal Conferences regarding legitimate variations in the use of bread with a small quantity of gluten and the use of mustum as Eucharistic matter (24 July 2003, Prot. N. 89/78 – 17498), the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith published the norms for the celebration of the Eucharist by persons who, for varying and grave reasons, cannot consume bread made in the usual manner nor wine fermented in the normal manner:

a) “Hosts that are completely gluten-free are invalid matter for the celebration of the Eucharist. 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” (A. 1-2).

b) “*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” (A. 3).

c) “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” (C. 1).

5. The same Congregation also decided that Eucharistic matter made with genetically modified organisms can be considered valid matter (cf. Letter to the Prefect of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, 9 December 2013, Prot. N. 89/78 – 44897).

6. Those who make bread and produce wine for use in the Mass must be aware that their work is directed towards the Eucharistic Sacrifice and that this demands their honesty, responsibility and competence.

7. In order to facilitate the observance of the general norms Ordinaries can usefully reach agreement at the level of the Episcopal Conference by establishing concrete regulations. Given the complexity of situations and circumstances, such as a decrease in respect for the sacred, it may be useful to mandate a competent authority to have oversight in actually guaranteeing the genuineness of the Eucharistic matter by producers as well as those responsible for its distribution and sale.

It is suggested, for example, that an Episcopal Conference could mandate one or more Religious Congregations or another body capable of carrying out the necessary checks on production, conservation and sale of the Eucharistic bread and wine in a given country and for other countries to which they are exported. It is recommended that the bread and wine to be used in the Eucharist be treated accordingly in the places where they are sold.

*From the offices of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, 15 June 2017, Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ.*

Robert Card, Sarah  
Prefect

+ Arthur Roche  
Archbishop Secretary

## CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH

**Circular Letter to all Presidents of the Episcopal Conferences  
concerning the use of low-gluten altar breads and mustum  
as matter for the celebration of the Eucharist**

24 July 2003

89/78 – 17498

*To their Eminences / Excellencies  
The Presidents of the Episcopal Conferences*

*Your Eminence / 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 the 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 alcoholism, 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 Card. Ratzinger**

*Prefect*