

**Guidelines for Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion (EMHC)
Archdiocese of Santa Fe**

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Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion Brief Theology and History of Eucharist

The Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches, “The Eucharist is a sacrifice of thanksgiving to the Father, a blessing by which the Church expresses her gratitude to God for all his benefits, for all that he has accomplished through creation, redemption and sanctification” (CCC 1360).

Catholics actively participate in the Eucharist as the source and summit of their Christian life. This active participation manifests itself by :

- gathering with a community of believers each Sunday and holy day,
- praying together at Mass in word, gesture and song,
- listening together to God’s word,
- giving thanks and praise to God together for the gifts of creation, and in a special way, for the gift of Jesus Christ – his life, death and resurrection, and
- sharing in and becoming the Body of Christ through reception of Holy Eucharist at Mass.

Catholics believe that through active participation in the Mass and in a special way, through the reception of Holy Communion at Mass, they are filled with the real presence of Christ, and are therefore sent to be Christ’s presence in the world until he comes again in glory. St. Augustine, bishop of Hippo, put it this way in the 5th century:

What you see...is bread and a cup. This is what your eyes report to you. But your faith has need to be taught that the bread is the body of Christ, the cup the blood of Christ...If then, you wish to understand the body of Christ, listen to the Apostle as he says to the faithful, “You are the body of Christ and His members”...You reply “Amen” to that which you are, and by replying you consent... Be a member of the body of Christ so that your “Amen” may be true... Be what you see, and receive what you are”.

Centuries later St. Thomas Aquinas gave us an explanation of how this mystery happens. He called it *transubstantiation*. By that he meant that the “accidents” (the visible reality) of bread and wine remain, but the “substance” is changed into Christ’s Body and Blood. This has also come to be understood as what Catholics mean by the “real presence” of Christ in the Eucharist.

The Church has always celebrated and revered the Eucharist. In its early history the members of the Christian community did what Jesus told them to do - they took and ate and drank knowing in faith that this was indeed a sharing in the Body and Blood of Christ. The sacred bread was taken in hand and the Sacred Cup was shared by all.

As time went on and the Church no longer consisted of members who had actually seen and known the Lord, and for many cultural and historical reasons, Eucharistic practices slowly began to change. By the 9th century the language of the Mass was no longer that of the people, as it was in the early Church. The altar table was moved from the midst of the people to the back wall of the church. The presider no longer faced the people as he led

them in prayer. The Eucharist became so removed from the people that the Christian community came to see themselves as unworthy of this precious gift, even though they were baptized and redeemed by the Lord. Few people received Holy Communion, and only then on the tongue. By the 13th century the cup was no longer shared with the people. As a result of these and other practices, the people's main contact with the Eucharist was through the elevation of the Eucharistic species which was actually added to the Mass. For the people this elevation was their opportunity to "receive" for "seeing" became "receiving." Jesus' command to his followers to "take and eat, and take and drink" seemed to no longer apply to all believers.

In modern times, the event which began to change this approach to the Eucharist was the election of Pope Pius X in 1903. Pope Pius X knew the great importance of the command of Jesus that believers "take and eat" that he changed the practice of the Church. No longer did a person have to wait until the age of 14 or 15 to be eligible to share in Holy Communion. Children who reached the age of reason, usually about 7 years old, were now welcomed to the altar table of the Lord. By bringing the children to the altar table, Pope Pius X also brought with them their parents and grandparents. Through this action participation in Holy Communion began to be returned to all believers.

Pope John XXIII convened Vatican Council II in 1962. The Council's first document was The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy. This fundamental teaching of the Church opened even further the understanding of the Eucharist and many of the practices regarding it.

On May 29, 1969, in the document Memoriale Domini the Church gave permission for the faithful to return to the ancient ritual practice of receiving Holy Communion in the hand and the practice went into effect in the United States on November 20, 1977. Lay people could now receive Holy Communion reverently, either on their tongue or in their hand. About this practice, Saint Cyril of Jerusalem wrote in the 4th century: "Make your left hand a throne for your right, because your right is going to receive the King; make a hollow of your palm and receive the body of Christ, saying after it: 'Amen!' ... Then, after you have partaken of the body of Christ, come forward to the chalice of His blood..."

On January 29, 1973, the instruction Immensae caritatis was issued by Pope Paul VI. With this instruction, the diocesan bishop was given permission to designate lay men and women to distribute the Eucharist as Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion. It stated that "...this faculty may be used whenever there is no priest, deacon or instituted acolyte present, or when the ordinary minister is prevented from administering Communion because of other pastoral obligations, ill health, or advanced age, or when the number of the faithful is so great that, unless Extraordinary Ministers assist in the distribution, the celebration would be unduly prolonged." It should also be noted that when Communion under Both Kinds is offered, the deacon, if present at Mass, is the ordinary minister of the Sacred Cup.

Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion Description, Selection Criteria, Formation and Training

Description

Extraordinary Ministers for the distribution of Holy Communion are properly formed, instructed and commissioned lay persons. EMHCs may be male or female. They should reflect the cultural diversity of their parish community. These ministers are appointed for a given parish community to aid in the distribution of Holy Communion at Mass and to the sick and homebound when ordinary ministers of Holy Communion are unavailable. EMHCs are not to function apart from their parish community. Ordinarily, EMHCs do not perform any other liturgical ministry at the Mass at which they serve as an EMHC.

When the situation requires, the presider of the Mass may call upon members of the faithful who are not EMHCs to aid him in the distribution of Holy Communion on that one occasion. Those called must be Catholics in good standing who are themselves able to receive the Eucharist.

As the Church teaches, the bishop is the chief liturgist of his diocese. For this reason, the Archbishop of Santa Fe regulates this ministry and all other liturgical ministries in collaboration with the pastors of the parishes of the Archdiocese.

Selection Criteria

In order for a person to be appointed as an EMHC, the following conditions must be met:

- Be a Catholic living in harmony with the teachings of the Church and be able to receive the Eucharist
- Be of sufficient age and maturity to perform the duties of an EMHC at Mass or to the sick and homebound in various locations (i.e. private homes, nursing homes, hospitals)
- Be chosen and appointed by the pastor for the parish entrusted to him

Formation and Training

Prior to beginning their ministry, EMHCs should be formed and trained in the following:

- Theology of the Eucharist and understanding of the Mass
- Theology and spirituality of ministry
- Universal church, archdiocesan and parish guidelines and procedures for their ministry

EMHCs should participate in ongoing theological and ministerial formation at the parish and/or Archdiocesan level.

Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion Commissioning, Length of Service, Reverence and Attire

Commissioning

After preparation for this ministry is completed, a formal commissioning of EMHCs takes place, normally at a Sunday Eucharist, by the pastor or his delegate. EMHCs are to exercise their ministry only in their own parish or institution.

An "Order for the Commissioning of Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion" can be found in the Book of Blessings, Ch. 63. (*see also a sample rite at the end of this material*)

Length of Service

Since ministry is a call both from God and the community in which it is exercised, it is appropriate that the choice of ministry and renewal of the term of service be mutually agreed upon by the individual and the parish. EMHCs generally will serve for a period of at least two (2) years, after which time an evaluation should occur. This evaluation may lead to a determination that the minister

- be re-commissioned as an EMHC for another term,
- is being called to another ministry,
- leave ministry all together at this time.

It is helpful that each parish keep accurate records of each EMHC's training, ongoing formation and their term(s) of service.

Reverence and Attire

EMHCs show utmost reverence for the Eucharist. This reverence is reflected in their demeanor at Mass (full, active and conscious participation in the liturgy; CSL 14), their attire, and the manner in which they handle the Eucharist.

A neat and reverential appearance is in keeping with the minister's role and belief in the presence of Christ in the Eucharist. The minister's attire should be appropriate and should not detract from that role. EMHCs should refrain from using strong cologne, perfume or aftershave because some recipients of Holy Communion have sensitivities to these scents and because these fragrances often remain on one's hands and can be transferred to the Eucharist.

In the Archdiocese of Santa Fe, EMHCs do not wear albs or any other special liturgical garb.

Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion Procedures Before, During, and After Mass

Before Mass

- EMHCs should arrive at the church at least 15 minutes before the scheduled Mass to both check in, and prepare themselves interiorly for their ministry
- Every parish should have clear, written, check-in procedures that are known to all priests, deacons and EMHCs. The procedures should include:
 - Where and how to check-in
 - How to find out the assigned Communion station and whether you will be distributing the Sacred Body or Precious Blood of Christ
 - How to prepare the appropriate amount of Eucharistic bread and wine to be brought in procession (if this is your duty)
 - Note that when Holy Communion is distributed under both kinds, the deacon is to distribute the Precious Blood (*GIRM #182*)
- EMHCs should sit within the assembly of believers; they should not be part of the opening or closing procession, nor sit in the sanctuary
- EMHCs should not perform another ministry during the same Mass, unless an emergency situation arises

During Mass

- EMHCs are called, as is the entire assembly, to full, conscious, active participation in the Eucharistic celebration
- Because EMHCs are models for the ritual behavior of the assembly, they should do all the ritual gestures of the assembly with strength and reverence, and make all verbal and sung ritual responses with faith and enthusiasm
- If EMHCs do not regularly model the current church and parish practices during liturgy, they should be counseled, re-trained or perhaps relieved of their ministry

Procedures for Distribution

- EMHCs may enter the sanctuary during the Fraction Rite, but should not approach the altar until after the presider has received Holy Communion; follow specific parish procedure
- Ordinarily no ministers should go to the tabernacle to bring previously consecrated hosts to the altar; all hosts for distribution should be consecrated at that Mass
- EMHCs receive Holy Communion after the priest (and deacon) have received, and before the reception of Holy Communion by the assembly; as indicated by the *GIRM 2002* and the US Bishop's Conference; all should make a bow of the head while saying "*Amen*" when receiving both the Body of Christ and the Precious Blood
- If there is no deacon, an EMHC may assist the presider in distributing Holy Communion to the other EMHCs; EMHCs are not to self-communicate either the Sacred Body or the Precious Blood
- After EMHCs receive Holy Communion, they are given their appropriate Communion vessel by the priest or deacon (In the Archdiocese of Santa Fe, when necessary, an EMHC may assist the presider in distributing the vessels for Holy Communion to the EMHCs, especially when there is no deacon present and there would be an undue delay in distributing Holy Communion to the faithful)

- Once all EMHCs have their vessels, they proceed reverently to their Communion stations
- In giving Holy Communion, the minister holds the host slightly above the vessel, looks at the communicant, and in a clear voice says, *“The Body of Christ”* to which the communicant responds *“Amen”*. These are the only words to be used. Nothing is to be added or subtracted, not even a name. Then the Sacred Body is placed in the hand or on the tongue according to the manner indicated by the communicant
- If a communicant begins to walk away carrying the host, the EMHC should say in a subdued voice, *“Please consume the host now”*
- Distribution of Communion under Both Kinds is recommended in all celebrations of the Eucharist; but it is the communicant’s option to receive from the Sacred Cup
- In giving the Precious Blood, the EMHC holds the Sacred Cup up slightly and says in a clear voice while looking at the communicant, *“The Blood of Christ”* to which the communicant responds *“Amen”*. These are the only words to be used. Nothing is to be added or subtracted, not even a name. Generally, the communicant should hold the Sacred Cup firmly in both hands and drink from it. However, in the case of a physical disability or weakness, the EMHC should be ready to assist in holding the Sacred Cup
- After the Blood of Christ has been received, the EMHC should wipe the rim of the Sacred Cup, inside and out, with a purificator and turn the Sacred Cup slightly before presenting it to the next communicant. The EMHC should be careful not to wipe in a manner where the purificator is dipped into the Precious Blood.
- The Sacred Cup is always ministered to the communicant; it may never be left for self-communication, except in the case of concelebrating priests
- Intinction is not customary in the United States and is discouraged in the Archdiocese of Santa Fe; the practice of self-intinction is not permitted
- Those EMHCs finishing distribution before others, can move to assist those ministers who still have communicants to serve; follow specific parish procedure in this regard
- It is recommended that there be two ministers of the Sacred Cup for every one minister of the Body of Christ. This allows for a smooth flow of the Communion procession
- It is recommended that ministers of the Sacred Cup are positioned a sufficient distance from the minister of the Body of Christ to ensure a smooth flow of the Communion procession
- It is recommended that every parish train enough EMHCs to be able to offer the Sacred Cup at every Mass

Accidents During Distribution

- If a host falls to the ground during distribution of Holy Communion, the EMHC should pick it up immediately and consume it then, or after distribution is over. It should never be put back in the vessel to be given to another communicant
- If the Precious Blood is spilled, the area should immediately be covered. It should then be blotted and washed after Mass with water and a purificator. The purificator should be rinsed and wrung out in the sacarium. If there is no sacarium, it should be rinsed in another vessel and the water poured into the ground in a secluded spot
- In either case, do not panic, and do not embarrass the communicant

Procedures After Distribution

- Once EMHCs are done with distribution, they return their vessels to the altar where any remaining hosts may be either consumed or prepared to be taken to the tabernacle; any remaining Precious Blood should be consumed at the altar by the priest, deacon or EMHCs (*Norms #52*)
- Communion vessels may be taken to the side(credence) table and cleansed after Mass, so that all may maintain a prayerful silence of word and movement after Communion; the vessels should be suitably covered
- EMHCs should return to their places in a dignified and reverent manner, not rushing
- Communion vessels should be purified by a priest or deacon; however, when a sufficient number of priests or deacons are not available, EMHCs may purify the vessels (special US Indult from the Holy See)

Miscellaneous

- EMHCs do not wash their hands in the ablution bowl in the sanctuary either before or after distribution of Holy Communion. All EMHCs are reminded to wash their hands in the sacristy or the rest room before Mass begins
- While performing their ministry, EMHCs do not bow or genuflect to the altar or tabernacle

Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion Ministry to Sick and Homebound

Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion (EMHCs) who take Communion to the sick and homebound have a role in sharing the Church's total ministry to the sick after the manner of Jesus. In bringing Communion to the sick and homebound, the EMHC represents Christ and manifests faith and charity on behalf of the whole community toward those who cannot be present at Sunday Mass. This ministry is a sign of support and concern shown by the community for its members.

Patients who are in the hospital find it a comfort and source of healing to have Holy Communion brought to them as often as possible. Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion may make Communion visits any day of the week in accordance with the schedule and the protocol of each hospital or long-term residential facility.

The EMHC becomes a vital link between the parish community and the member who is sick or homebound. It is beneficial for visits to the sick and homebound to occur after Sunday Mass so that the link between the parish liturgical celebration and the parishioner is maintained. Taking a parish bulletin also helps maintain that link. The parish may also have a special blessing and dismissal for EMHCs after Communion; the assembly is sending them forth to do their ministry on the behalf of the whole parish community.

EMHCs do not replace the ministry of the priest to the people, but rather extend and expand it so that all will have more regular contact with Christ in Holy Communion.

EMHCs who minister to the sick and homebound should be empathic and compassionate. They should be sensitive to the sick and homebound person's needs including the spiritual, emotional, and material. They should always take care to maintain the confidentiality and dignity of the individual. They should also maintain contact with the pastor and/or parish pastoral care coordinator and inform them if the person is in need of sacramental anointing, the sacrament of reconciliation, or a pastoral visit. In addition, if EMHCs observe a particular physical or social need of a homebound person, they should bring this need to the attention of the pastoral care coordinator as well so that the parish may respond appropriately.

According to the document Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharist Outside of Mass, "The Eucharist for Communion outside of church is to be carried in a pyx or other covered vessel; the vesture of the minister and the manner of carrying the Eucharist should be appropriate and in accord with local circumstances". In the Archdiocese of Santa Fe, EMHCs dress in appropriate lay attire when bringing Communion to the sick or homebound. Consecrated hosts are usually taken from the EMHC's home parish or from the particular hospital's tabernacle. Follow the procedures of the parish or hospital.

If the sick/homebound person is well enough to participate in the full ritual, “Communion Under Ordinary Circumstances”, use that ritual. If the person is not very well, use the shorter ritual “Communion in a Hospital or Institution”. Both of these rituals are found in the rite, Pastoral Care of the Sick or in the smaller booklet, Communion of the Sick available from the Office of Worship.

EMHCs serving in hospitals or institutions should always be sure that they are giving Holy Communion to the correct person. If there are Catholic family members or Catholic staff present, the EMHC should ask them if they would like to receive Holy Communion as well. When EMHCs have completed their assigned distribution, they should return any extra hosts to the hospital tabernacle or consume the hosts privately.

Extraordinary Ministers of Communion who are taking Holy Communion to the sick, homebound or to those in hospitals are to present the host in a prayerful manner. They are not to make judgments regarding the suitability of the person to receive the Holy Communion; such concerns are to be referred to the pastor or pastoral care coordinator.

Ordinarily, the parish pastoral care coordinator makes assignments and communicates assignments to the EMHCs and the sick and homebound.

Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion Dos and Don'ts of Bringing Communion to the Sick and Homebound

Do:

1. Make an appointment to visit. Ask how the person is feeling and if there will be others present so you will have sufficient hosts for all to receive. Also ask if they can prepare a table with a cloth, candle, cross or crucifix.
2. Use the ritual "Communion of the Sick" (Chapter 3) from Pastoral Care of the Sick and bring a Bible to read the scripture readings.
3. Begin informally. Introduce yourself to those who are present and briefly explain what you have come to do. Pay attention to how the sick/homebound person is feeling.
4. Invite those who are present to participate in the prayers. If they feel comfortable, enlist the help of family or friends to do the readings.
5. Based on the person's strength/attentiveness, share with them the day's homily.
6. Offer them the host, or a small piece of the host and have a cup of water handy if the person has difficulty swallowing.
7. Create links to the parish, e.g., bring a parish bulletin, share news from the parish, ask if there is anything the parish can do for them, if they need to see a priest for the sacrament of reconciliation or anointing of the sick.
8. Thank the person for the opportunity to pray with them and for their hospitality.

Don't:

1. *Don't* visit a sick person if you are not feeling well yourself. Find a substitute.
2. *Don't* stay too long or take the role of a counselor or confidant.
3. *Don't* compete with a television or radio. Politely ask if these can be turned off during the service.
4. *Don't* carry the consecrated host in a plastic bag, purse, pocket or other unsuitable container. Instead, use a pyx to carry the consecrated host.
5. *Don't* leave the consecrated host if the person cannot receive it. Instead, return at a later time to see the sick person. Consume any consecrated host or return it to tabernacle in the church or hospital chapel. *Don't* take hosts home or leave them in your car.

Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion Sample Rite of Commissioning

(adapted from the "Order for the Commissioning of Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion," as found in the Book of Blessings)

Persons designated for the administration of Communion in special circumstances should be commissioned by the diocesan bishop or his delegate (Immensae caritatis, nos. 1, 6). The rite should be celebrated in the presence of the people during Mass or outside Mass. The pastor is the usual minister of this rite. However, he may delegate another priest to celebrate it, or a deacon when it is celebrated outside Mass.

ORDER OF COMMISSIONING DURING MASS

Presentation of the Candidates

After the homily the presider explains the reason for this ministry and the meaning of the celebration, and then presents those chosen to serve as Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion to the people, using these or similar words:

Dear friends in Christ,

Our sisters and brothers (N. and N.) are being entrusted with the important duty of administering the Eucharist, with taking Communion to the sick, and with giving it as viaticum to the dying.

The presider pauses, and then addresses the candidates:

In this ministry, you, my sisters and brothers, must be examples of the Christian life, taking your faith ever more seriously and striving to grow in holiness through this sacrament of love and unity. Remember that, though we are many, we who share this one bread and one cup become one body in Christ Jesus.

As ministers of Holy Communion, be, therefore, especially observant of the Lord's command to love your neighbor. For when he gave his body as food to his disciples, he told them: "This is my commandment: Love one another as I have loved you."

Examination

After the address, the candidates stand in front of the presider, who asks:

Are you resolved to administer the body and blood of the Lord to your brothers and sisters, and so serve to build up the Church?

R/. I am.

Are you resolved to administer the Holy Eucharist with utmost care and reverence?

R/. I am.

Prayer of Blessing

The assembly stands. The presider invites all present to pray:

Dear friends in Christ, let us pray with confidence to God our Father; let us ask that these our brothers and sisters who have been chosen to be ministers of the Eucharist may be filled with God's blessings.

All pray silently for a brief period. Then the presider invites the assembly to raise both hands in a gesture of blessing and says:

Gracious God, creator and guide of your family, bless + our brothers and sisters (N. and N.) .

May they give the bread of life and cup of salvation to your faithful people, be strengthened and comforted by it, and one day share in the everlasting banquet of heaven.

We ask this through Christ our Lord.

R/. Amen.

The Prayer of the Faithful

An invocation for the newly commissioned ministers and/or those to whom they will minister should be added to the Prayer of the Faithful such as:

For our ministers of Holy Communion, that they witness to the saving mystery of Christ by their deep faith in the Eucharist and by love of their neighbor, let us pray to the Lord...

For the sick who will share in Holy Communion through these ministers, that Christ heal and strengthen them, we pray to the Lord...

For the dying who will share in Holy Communion through these ministers, that as they receive the food for their final journey, Christ may welcome them into heaven, we pray to the Lord...

Liturgy of the Eucharist

In the procession at the presentation of gifts, some of the newly commissioned ministers carry the vessels with the bread and wine to the altar. At Communion they receive the Eucharist under both kinds.

Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion Bibliography and Publishers of Resources**

Original Sources

The Liturgy Documents: A Parish Resource, Vol.1, 4th ed. (English and Spanish) Liturgy Training Publications (LTP) , 2004

Pastoral Care of the Sick (bi-lingual). (LTP and MACC), 1986

Communion of the Sick. The Liturgical Press, 1984.

Pastoral Sources

Books

- Fleming, Austin. Preparing for Liturgy. LTP, 1997.
- Foley, Ed. From Age to Age: How Eucharist was Celebrated Throughout the Ages. LTP, 1991.
- Gaillardetz, Richard. Broken and Poured Out: A Spirituality for Eucharistic Ministers. Ligouri 2002.
- Huck, Gabe. Liturgy with Style and Grace. (English and Spanish) LTP, rev. 1998.
- Hughes, Kathleen. Saying Amen: A Mystagogy of Sacrament. LTP, 1999.
- Johnson, Lawrence J. The Mystery of Faith. FDLC, rev. 2003.
- Kwatera, Michael. The Ministry of Communion. Liturgical Press, 2004.
- LTP and MACC, Los Ministros de la Comunion a los Enfermos. LTP, 2002.
- LaVerdiere, Eugene. Comer en el Reino de Dios. LTP
- Mahony, Cardinal. Gather Faithfully Together: Guide for Sunday Mass. (English and Spanish) LTP, 1997.
- Mick, Lawrence. Worshipping Well. Liturgical Press, 1997.

Periodicals

- Rite, LTP
- Liturgical Catechesis, Resource Publications
- Liturgical Ministry, Liturgical Press
- Ministry and Liturgy, Resource Publications
- Parish Life, Celebration Publications
- Pastoral Music, National Association of Pastoral Musicians (NPM)

Pamphlets

- National Pastoral Life Center, "Dos & Don'ts for Eucharistic Ministers"

Videos, Audios, CDs

- [A History of the Mass.](#) (video) (English and Spanish) (LTP)
- [The Roman Catholic Mass Today.](#) (video) (English and Spanish) (LTP)
- [Say Amen to What You Are: The Communion Rite.](#) (video) (LTP)
- [The Eucharist as Mystagogy.](#) (5 volume CD) (WLP)
- [Training the Eucharistic Minister.](#) (video) (Liturgical Press)

Publishers of Liturgical Resources

Celebration Publications	1-816-531-0538	www.celebrationseries.org
Federation of Diocesan		
Liturgical Commissions (FDLC)	1-202-635-6990	www.fdlc.org
GIA Publications	1-800-GIA-1358	www.giamusic.com
Ligouri Publications	1-800-325-9521	www.ligouri.org
Liturgy Training Publications (LTP)	1-800-933-1800	www.ltp.org
Liturgical Press	1-800-858-5450	www.litpress.org
National Association of		
Pastoral Musicians	1-240-247-3000	www.npm.org
National Pastoral Life Center	1-212-431-7825	Fax: 1-212-274-9786
Oregon Catholic Press (OCP)	1-800-548-8749	www.ocp.org
Resource Publications	1-888-273-7782	www.rpinet.com
World Library Publications (WLP)	1-800-566-6150	www.wlpmusic.com

*** most of the resources listed are available for review from the Archdiocesan Resource Center (505) 831-8179*

Appendix

Celiac-Sprue Disease and the Eucharist

In recent years pastors have received questions from those afflicted with various manifestations of gluten intolerance, such as Celiac-Sprue disease. These questions are in regard to the reception of Holy Communion. Many gluten-intolerant sufferers are unable to ingest wheat flour commonly used in the preparation of communion wafers in the United States. Here are some common questions and answers.

1. Can a person with gluten intolerance receive Communion?

The common advice given to many Celiac-Sprue sufferers and gluten-intolerant patients is to receive only the Precious Blood at Holy Communion. However, even then, the Precious Blood must be carefully ministered to make sure it has not been contaminated with gluten during the commingling rite when the presider places a particle of the host in the chalice, or at any other time.

A separate vessel of wine should be reserved for a gluten-intolerant communicant and care should be taken that the wine does not come into any contact with hosts or particles of hosts. The separate vessel of wine can be placed on the altar when the gifts are prepared during Mass.

2. May bread or a wafer made of rice flour be used?

No, because rice wafers are invalid matter for Eucharist according to the *Code of Canon Law* (c924.4). The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF) has ruled in 2003 that a completely gluten-free host is invalid matter for the sacrament.

3. Are there any low-gluten hosts that can be used?

The CDF has determined that a low-gluten host is valid matter for Eucharist. As of January 1, 2005, the Benedictine Sisters of Perpetual Adoration of Clyde, Missouri have developed a truly low gluten host. This product is the only true, low-gluten hosts know to the USCCB Secretariat on the Liturgy and approved for Mass in the United States. The total gluten content of this product is 37 micrograms or 0.01%. It contains unleavened wheat and water and is free of additives. Many gluten-intolerant persons may be able to consume it, or some portion of it. However, sufferers are strongly advised to check with their personal physicians in advance.

4. What is the contact information for the Benedictine Sisters who make these hosts?

Congregation of Benedictine Sisters of Perpetual Adoration
Altar Breads Department
31970 State Highway P
Clyde, MO 64432
Phone: 1-800-223-2772
E-mail: altrabreads@benedictinesisters.org
Contact: Sr. Rita, OSB, Manager