

CELIAC DISEASE AND THE EUCHARIST

At least 3 million Americans suffer from Celiac Disease (1 in 133 people), an allergy to wheat gluten. This allergy creates difficulties for those who must avoid any food or product that contains wheat or gluten, a thickening agent in many foods—including those that contain no wheat at all. Some people are highly allergic and can have significant health problems from even a small amount; others may experience only mild symptoms or none at all. A growing number of people, especially children, are being diagnosed with this intestinal condition.

As Catholics, the bread that is consecrated to be the Body of Christ poses a particular health issue for people with Celiac disease. Some choose not to receive the Consecrated Host and only drink from the Cup; others may not be able to receive even from the Cup if any gluten has transferred to it by someone who has received from the Cup previously. People who are highly allergic have to be concerned about cross-contamination.

The Catholic Church has granted the use of a low-gluten host for those who cannot tolerate wheat gluten. The host has to have a minimal amount of gluten in order to be “bread,” which is required for consecration (we cannot use rice, for example). There are several people in our parish who are currently using this alternate host. *Perhaps there are others among us who suffer from this condition?* If so, we have been developing a set of procedures for the distribution of Holy Communion using the low-gluten hosts, and to receive from the Cup without concern for cross-contamination.

If you have Celiac Disease or any allergy to wheat gluten, please contact the parish to learn more about how we can help keep you close to Christ in the Eucharist while responding to your health needs. We plan to begin our new procedures the first weekend of September 3-4, 2011. (949) 496-1307.