Holy Redeemer Sacristan Ministry

Protocol for Receiving Low Gluten Hosts

Background

Parishioners at Holy Redeemer who have celiac disease or are sensitive to gluten may be unable to receive communion in the form of standard hosts. Holy Redeemer offers two alternative means of receiving the Body and Blood of Christ: to receive a low gluten host, or to receive the Precious Blood.

Option 1: Low Gluten Hosts

A low gluten host is a special host with a low amount of gluten in it. Holy Redeemer orders its low gluten hosts from Liturgica, which are listed on its website[1] as having less than 20 PPM of gluten. Note that these hosts are not entirely gluten free[2], so a parishioner may opt instead to receive the Precious Blood.

Option 2: The Precious Blood

The consecrated wine is referred to as the Precious Blood of Christ. Parishioners who have celiac disease can receive the Precious Blood from a chalice, as an alternative to receiving a low gluten host.

This document describes the protocol for receiving low gluten hosts; please see the corresponding document for the protocol for receiving the Precious Blood.

A Low Gluten Ciborium

Holy Redeemer keeps a special small ciborium[3] in the tabernacle with consecrated low gluten hosts. This ciborium has a clip on it which allows it to be clipped inside a larger ciborium. When distributing communion, the presider (the priest who is celebrating Mass) will clip this ciborium inside the main ciborium he is using to distribute communion. This allows him to serve both ordinary and low gluten hosts during communion.

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[1] See https://www.liturgica.ca/en/product/low-gluten-altar-bread-for-the-people-1-3-8-box-of-100, accessed November 20, 2024.
[2] See https://www.catholic.com/qa/its-got-to-have-gluten-or-it-isnt-a-host, accessed November 20, 2024.
[3] The vessel used to hold hosts is called a “ciborium”.

How to Receive a Low Gluten Host

If you wish to receive a low gluten host, at communion time, you should enter the queue formed in front of the presider. When you get to the front of the queue, clearly request that the priest give you a low gluten host. The priest will open the low gluten ciborium and serve you one from there. The rest of communion proceeds as usual.

Over time, the priests at Holy Redeemer will likely learn that you receive low gluten hosts, and you may not need to explicitly request a low gluten host. Nonetheless you should be attentive and confirm the priest serves you a host from the low gluten ciborium - during celebration of the Mass, priests have many details to attend to, and not always remember.

The First Time you Receive a Low Gluten Host

While there is no special protocol for the first time you receive a low gluten host, it can make the process go more smoothly if you introduce yourself to the priest before Mass and let him know that you will now be receiving low gluten hosts. This is your opportunity to ask him any clarifying questions you may have.

If you wish, you may also contact the head sacristan[4] to advise that you will now be receiving low gluten hosts. This is an entirely optional step, but the more accurate the head sacristans' sense of how many parishioners receive low gluten hosts, the higher the likelihood that sufficient hosts will be stocked.

Who is Responsible for Preparing Low Gluten Hosts?

The sacristan ministry prepares all the liturgical elements for Mass, including ordinary hosts, and low gluten hosts. The sacristan at the Mass is responsible for checking the number of consecrated hosts in the tabernacle before Mass, and preparing additional hosts to be consecrated. This includes setting out low gluten hosts to be consecrated.

Questions, Problems or Errors

Like all liturgical volunteers, sacristans work hard to ensure that the Mass is beautiful, reverently prepared and logistically set up in a manner that leads all present to worship God. Nonetheless, mistakes do happen, and protocols do change over time in order to improve them. If you have had an experience where you have not been able to participate fully in communion, we apologize, and want to improve our ministry. If you have experienced significant or repeated problems or errors, or if you have questions, please contact the head sacristan using the contact information in the bulletin.

[4] See the front of the bulletin for contact information - the "Sacristans" entry.