

### **What is Coeliac Condition?**

Coeliac condition is an adverse reaction to gliadin, which is a protein in gluten. Gluten is a constituent of common grains such as wheat, and is in a wide range of foods, including the bread for the celebration of the Eucharist. One in every hundred Irish people is estimated to suffer from coeliac condition.

Coeliac condition manifests itself in a continuing immune response that damages the intestines, reduces the absorption of nutrients and creates several discomforting symptoms. It increases the risk of anaemia, osteoporosis, diabetes and other medical conditions. Coeliac condition can even be life threatening.

Coeliac sufferers have to adhere to lifelong medical supervision. Their care is assisted by the Coeliac Society of Ireland. The Irish Bishops' Conference wishes to ensure the full participation of coeliac sufferers in the celebration of the Eucharist.

### **The Pastoral Care of the Faithful with Coeliac Condition in the Celebration of the Eucharist**

- 1. Holy Communion under both kinds for all the assembled faithful is the best means of equal and unencumbered access to Holy Communion for the faithful with coeliac condition. It also serves to avoid identifying their diagnosis to the whole assembly.*
- 2. For bread to be valid matter for the celebration of the Eucharist, it has to contain a minimum quantity of gluten, in order to obtain naturally the confection and nature of bread. Increasingly, this minimal amount is considered problematic for coeliacs. The bishops call on all parishes to administer Holy Communion under both kinds to all the assembly, so that the faithful with gluten intolerance, adults and children, may receive from the chalice only, without difficulty or embarrassment.*
- 3. Low gluten hosts may continue to be used in the celebration of the Eucharist. With this remains the challenge to avoid cross contamination of regular gluten and low gluten breads, both in their storage and handling in the sacristy and in their administration as hosts in Holy Communion.*
- 4. To better assist the faithful who suffer from coeliac condition, one minister ought to be assigned in every celebration of the Eucharist to distribute low gluten hosts only. It would be helpful that the type of pyx or ciborium used and the location of the minister is standard in all churches of a diocese. With consistent arrangements, it is the fervent wish of the bishops that the faithful living with coeliac condition who are prohibited from receiving the Sacrament by current arrangements will be enabled to encounter the Lord in Holy Communion.*
- 5. It is a parent's choice to decide if his/her child receives from the chalice or not. That so called 'gluten-free' hosts are not 'gluten-free', and their minimum gluten content likely remains problematic, will assist parents to decide the health benefit to their child of receiving from the chalice only.*



6. *Where Communion under both kinds is being introduced for the first time, new arrangements for the giving and receiving of Holy Communion will have to be enacted in parishes. Guidelines will be provided by the National Centre for Liturgy.*
7. *Note that during the Fraction Rite, a small piece of the regular host is broken off and placed in one chalice only. All other chalices are suitably administered to the faithful with coeliac condition. Significantly, 'Intinction' relates to the minister of Holy Communion dipping the host in the chalice. It does not mean the communicant receives the host and self intincts it in the chalice. In view of the prevalence of coeliac condition in Ireland, 'Intinction' is not helpful even when appropriately carried out, as it gives rise to the contamination of the consecrated wine for communicants with coeliac condition.*
8. *Holy Communion is a divine gift offered and received. It is never appropriate to have the giving and receiving of Holy Communion experienced as self-service.*
9. *Notice from the bishop will be given to doctors and to medical centres on the availability in each parish of Holy Communion under both kinds to all the faithful. This notice will say that Holy Communion in this manner facilitates easy access to Communion from the chalice for persons with coeliac condition. The availability of low gluten hosts in the same location in churches of the diocese will also be notified.*

Holy Communion under both kinds wholly fulfils the Lord's Command: 'Take, eat; this is my body,' and, 'Drink from it, all of you' Mt 26: 26-27. It, in turn, fulfils the teaching of the Church, namely; that when Holy Communion "takes place under both kinds, there is a clearer expression of divine will, and the Eucharist as the symbol of the banquet of heaven is more clearly evident." *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* (281-285a).

At the same time, "Christ, whole and entire, and the true Sacrament, is received even under only one species, and hence that as regards the resulting fruits, those who receive under only one species are not deprived of any grace that is necessary for salvation." *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* (282).