



AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONFERENCE

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Catholic Church seeks to address pastoral needs of Coeliac Disease sufferers

Catholics suffering from Coeliac Disease would not be excluded from the Eucharist under a Vatican ruling that altar breads must be made from wheat flour, Fr Peter Williams of the National Liturgical Commission said today.

Fr Williams said the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith recently issued a response to the question of what constitutes valid matter for the celebration of the Eucharist.

The Congregation determined that gluten-free flour, for example that made from maize, did not fulfil the requirements for valid matter.

Fr Williams said that following the ruling, the Catholic Church in Australia had acted quickly to ensure that low-wheaten altar breads were available. Catholics were also able to take Holy Communion by arranging with the priest to receive Communion from the chalice, he said.

“The National Liturgical Commission contacted manufacturers and distributors of altar breads in Australia requesting that gluten free hosts be withdrawn from sale,” he said.

“In order to address the pastoral needs of Coeliacs, the NLC in collaboration with Ozanam Industries sought to find a wheat-flour that was low gluten and would satisfy the requirements of both the CDF and the standards established in Australia to identify a product as low gluten according to the relevant food standards.

“Such a flour has now been sourced which accords with the standard.”

Fr Williams said that in implementing the ruling, the Church was at all times concerned for the physical and spiritual welfare of those suffering from Coeliac Disease.

“The NSW Coeliac Society has advised that there is a possibility that very sensitive Coeliacs might have some reaction to the low gluten hosts but it is difficult to determine exactly how many sufferers might be affected because of the wide spectrum of reaction to the disease,” he said.

“The pastoral provision is always made that if a Coeliac concludes that she or he might have a reaction to the low gluten hosts they can still receive sacramental Communion by arranging with the priest to receive Communion from the chalice.”

For more information contact Fr Peter Williams on 02 8838 3415.