

Communion host 'is safe for coeliacs', says charity

SPECIAL low-gluten Communion hosts have received the blessing of an Irish coeliac charity. The Vatican recently moved to clarify their stance on Communion hosts and said that while totally gluten-free hosts were not acceptable due to their ingredients, 'low-gluten hosts' or partially gluten-free 'are valid matter'.

Fergal O'Sullivan, the CEO of the Coeliac Society of Ireland, explained that the low-gluten hosts, which have been deemed acceptable by the Catholic Church, are also completely acceptable for those who live with coeliac disease, as it contains a level of gluten which is low enough to mark them as

By Emma Jane Hade

safe. According to Mr O'Sullivan, wheat is the only substance which is authorised by the Roman Catholic Church to make communion hosts. And he said his organisation was aware of three companies in Ireland which produce the low-gluten hosts that are acceptable for both the Church and for people who live with coeliac disease - which is an intolerance to a protein contained in wheat, barley and rye.

Mr O'Sullivan said the so-called low-gluten hosts, which are acceptable in the Catholic Church, contains 'less than 20 parts per million of gluten',

marking them as safe for coeliacs. 'The worldwide agreed standard for something to be gluten free is that it contains less than 20 parts per million of gluten. If you have coeliac disease, you are safely able to consume something less than 20 parts per million.'

'If the host is made with gluten-free wheat starch, it does actually meet the criteria for somebody with coeliac disease. But it also meets the Vatican's definition of low-gluten as well.'

The Vatican's Cardinal Robert Sarah issued a circular to bishops several weeks ago, which stated unleavened bread cannot be completely gluten free.

Dr Mark Dooley



MORAL MATTERS

When words speak louder than actions

THE Guardian newspaper runs a weekly feature entitled: 'My Writing Day.' The concept is simple: famous authors describe their writing routines, habits and ways of working. That it continues to attract a wide readership shows just how intrigued people are by authors' lives.

I know this from first-hand experience. Whenever I appear in public, someone invariably asks how many words I write each day. Another favourite is: 'Where do you get your inspiration from?'

I never have any easy answer to such questions simply because there are no standard rules to writing. The truth is that you go into a room, shut the door and sit at a desk. After many hours, you emerge again and get on with the ordinary tasks of life.

British novelist Hilary Mantel is correct: writing is not glamorous. You sit alone in front of the page and hope that your muse will rise to the occasion. This demands dedication, devotion and great patience.

It is often lonely, dispiriting and frustrating - especially when the ideas refuse to flow.

Indeed, some writers will do anything rather than write. They will devise all sorts of schemes to avoid a confrontation with the computer.

In the end, you can only postpone that confrontation for so long. Without words on a page you won't get very far as a writer. Bad writing can be made good, but a blank page is irredeemable.

Writing is a solitary art that requires work. But writers have different ways of working, methods which are more a product of personality and temperament.

Some write in the early morning, others late at night. Some are good with deadlines, whereas others need time in order to condense their thoughts into pristine prose.

It took George Orwell only a few months to write *Animal Farm*. Stephen King will not leave his desk before producing a couple of thousand words each day. Most writers usually strive for whatever they can manage.

So, no, writing is not glamorous, but it is profoundly fulfilling. A writer sits at his desk and, to the naked eye, he is simply typing on a machine. But the writer sees with the inner eye and projects what he

sees on to the screen.

The work of writing consists of creating worlds and shaping ideas that will transform readers' lives. With a single paragraph, a writer can bring to life people long since gone. He can cast aside the shadows and, with one stroke, let the sun shine.

Writing - real writing - touches people in a way that few other things can. To compose something meaningful, something that soothes a broken soul, is the work of love. It is as though a healing hand comes forth from the page to soften the pain.

A writer can bring light or darkness to any situation. Our words are not without consequence, not without lasting significance through time. For once you commit something to paper, it comes to life each time it is read.

Writing connects you to the dead and to imaginative people who can never die. In the solitariness of a silent room, Othello, Scrooge, Frankenstein and Gatsby were born. And, once born, they can never perish.

What would the world be like without those characters who walk with us down the centuries offering their example and advice? They exist from age to age, warning us what to avoid and how to live. As long as people read, they shall be as real to them as the world itself.

There is, of course, a lot of self-indulgent writing - writing that aims solely to satisfy the author. But writing at its best always keeps the reader in focus. By 'reader' I don't mean reviewer, but that one person whose life might be changed or saved by what you say.

ALL of which means that it really doesn't matter how a writer goes about his craft. We all pretty much do the same thing. We sit at a screen and pump out words in silence.

What matters is not how we work, but what we say when we work. Will this lighten or add to someone's load? Will it be a source of inspiration and consolation, or will it unleash ideas and characters we may wish were never conceived?

In itself, writing may not be glamorous or easy, but what other craft possesses the power to give life, banish the blues or make angels sing?

And the wonder of it is that once they start singing, their hymns will sound forever.

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