

A visiting person at mass commented to me about the large whole wheat host Father uses at mass. She said, “Now I know why I like the white host. At my church at the consecration, you see Jesus, a white & unblemished lamb. Here you see flecks of color in the wheat.” Can we use white?

The short answer is that, yes, we could use a white host. There are only two stipulations set down in Canon Law for the eucharistic bread:

- 1 “The bread must be only wheat and recently made so that there is no danger of spoiling.” (Can. 924)
- 2 “According to the ancient tradition of the Latin Church, the priest is to use unleavened bread in the eucharistic celebration whenever he offers it.” (Can. 926)

The question we should probably ask is: “Why would we want use a white host rather than our current whole wheat host?” When we look at the host after it is consecrated, it is still supposed to look like bread. The host is changed into the Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity of Jesus Christ, but it still retains its original appearance. It is part of the mystery, part of the miracle. It is not supposed to look like a piece of human flesh or like a lamb, or a rock, or a bridegroom, or a shepherd, or any of the other images that we have for Christ. We see Jesus present in the Eucharist with our eyes of faith.

With regard to the imagery of the white lamb, I can only comment that my wife, Jenni, is a hand spinner and used to have two white sheep that she raised for their wool. My observation is that the color of those “white” sheep reminded me much more of whole wheat bread than it did of Wonder Bread.

The whole wheat, unleavened hosts that we use at mass are probably much closer to the bread used by Jesus at the Last Supper. At that supper Jesus said, “This is my body, which will be given for you; do this in memory of me.” (Luke 22:19) And if you want to look for imagery, look at the flecks of color in the host and remember Jesus’ words, “Amen, amen, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains just a grain of wheat; but if it dies, it produces much fruit.” (John 12:24)

Deacon Joe