

## CONTINUED...

## Eucharistic

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those who are in full Communion with the Church." (paragraph 1395)

In guidelines approved by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops Nov. 14 to supplant guidelines in use since 1986, the bishops point out that Christians from churches with a similar understanding of the sacrament and whose ordinations the Roman Catholic Church considers valid may receive Catholic Communion, and Catholics may partake in Communion in these other churches. These denominations are the Orthodox churches, the Assyrian Church of the East, and the Polish National Catholic Church.

The church does allow non-Catholics Christians to receive Catholic Communion in a few limited circumstances, such as danger of death or unavailability of ministers of their own faith, and when they are "properly disposed" toward the Catholic understanding of the Eucharist.

But under normal circumstances, the bishops' guidelines state, "Because Catholics believe that the celebration of the Eucharist is a sign of the reality of the oneness of faith, life and worship, members of those churches with whom we are not yet fully united are ordinarily not admitted to Communion."

And the church does not allow Catholics to receive Communion in these other churches for the same reasons, except under similar exceptional exceptions.

Both Workmaster and Sister Rehrauer said that discussions are underway among the Catholic, Episcopal and Lutheran churches, and at some point when a common understanding about the Eucharist is forged intercommunion may be permitted among the three — but not others.

## More misconceptions

Intercommunion is also not generally permitted at weddings and funerals — two instances in which some Catholics think the rules are relaxed.

Sister Rehrauer pointed out that an ex-

ception is made for a non-Catholic spouse if that spouse requests permission to receive Communion, has a Catholic understanding of the Eucharist and if the bishop of the diocese grants permission. But that permission is not extended to other non-Catholic members of the congregation.

Another common misconception is that divorced Catholics may not receive.

Workmaster said a divorced person is prohibited from receiving Communion only if he or she marries a different person without first receiving a declaration of nullity (annulment) for the first marriage.

## Education needed

Sister Rehrauer said the confusion concerning the Eucharist may be due to in part to the church's focus on other issues in recent years, and that more attention eucharistic teachings is needed.

"I wonder if in the last number of years somehow we haven't been clear enough on some of the doctrinal issues as we have

been, say, on social justice," she speculated. "Or did we just assume people would know?"

She noted on a national level, preparation for the millennium would likely include materials on the Eucharist.

Dioceses and parishes can also carry out education efforts — ranging from bulletin articles to more emphasis on such devotions as Benediction, she suggested.

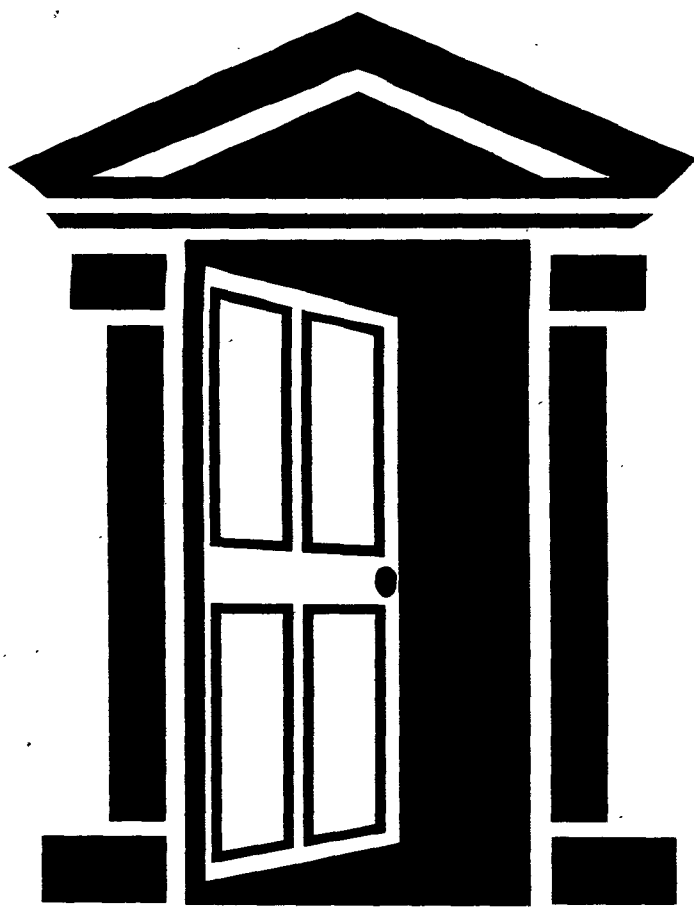
Workmaster, meanwhile, said the diocese had been concentrating on preaching in recent years, and she hopes to see added emphasis on the Liturgy of the Eucharist portion of the Mass in the coming years.

"We need to do something to celebrate the eucharistic prayer so that people understand what this is all about," she said.

In dealing with confusions over rules concerning who can receive, however, Workmaster advised pastoral sensitivity.

"All of those kinds of situations, none of us can really judge what is in another's heart," she said.

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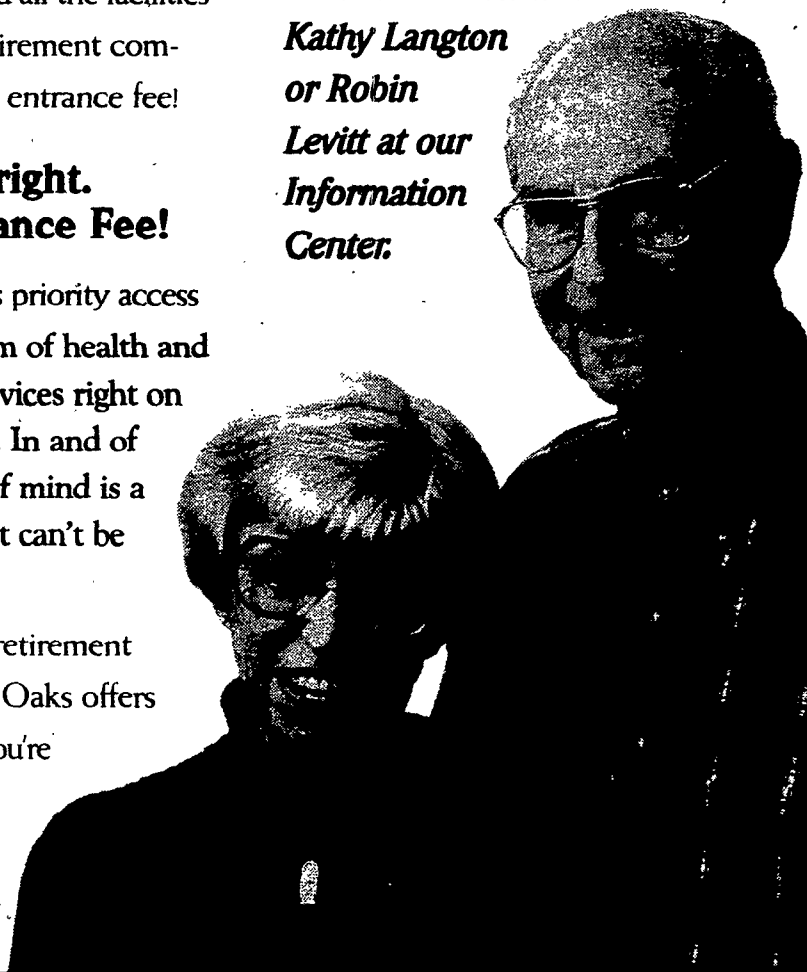
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