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Liturgical revisions get under way in diocese

Over the next few months, parish leaders will instruct parishioners to make a small, reverential bow before receiving Communion. They will also be urged to stand during parts of the Mass at which they may be accustomed to sitting or kneeling.

These are among the more noticeable changes contained in the updated General Instruction of the Roman Missal, which Bishop Matthew H. Clark asked parishes to begin implementing in the Rochester Diocese the weekend of June 7-8, 2003. The new General Instruction (GIRM) was approved by the United States bishops in November 2002 and was confirmed by the Holy See in March 2003.

Although several adjustments are in store, Joan Workmaster, diocesan director of liturgy, doesn't consider them to be earth-shattering.

"When this first hit the media, a lot of secular media jumped on this and misinterpreted what it was. People's anticipation was, 'Oh my heavens, now what are we going to have to do?'" The resultant coverage led people to believe "the Mass was going to be set on its ear," Workmaster said.

"In actuality very little has changed; the underlying theology has not changed at all. It's a Vatican II document that has been re-examined that makes clearer things that have not been clearly written out," she continued. "Most of the change is to elaborate, for better understanding. This is not so much a time we're go-



Photo illustration by Rebecca Gosselin and Linda Jeanne Rivers/Catholic Courier

ing to face revolutionary change, but to re-examine what we've been called to do in the first place."

The GIRM, found in the front of the Roman Missal, provides detailed guidelines for everyone and everything connected with the Mass. Since the Second Vatican Council's historic revisions to the Mass took effect in the mid-1960s, the GIRM has been revised by Vatican officials two other times — in 1969 and 1975.

Although the latest update was finalized in 2000, Work-

master said most U.S. dioceses are just beginning implementation of the latest revision. She explained that the three-year delay arose from the difficulty of translating the text of the GIRM from Latin to English, and also because U.S. bishops needed to develop and receive Vatican approval for GIRM norms particular to the United States.

To better ensure clear understanding of the GIRM, the diocesan Office of Liturgy, assisted by the Liturgical Commission, presented workshops

this spring for priests, deacons and parish staff members. Workmaster suggests that parish leaders implement the GIRM revisions gradually, maintaining frequent dialogue with parishioners about the changes via pulpit announcements and bulletin articles.

She observed that this process also encourages parishes to tighten up their approach to liturgy — even in areas that were not subject to GIRM revision.

"Some will adjust smoothly and some will have to look at

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Story by Mike Latona