

## LITURGICAL

Continued from page 1  
the way they're celebrating liturgy," Workmaster said. "This is where the wake-up call comes."

### POSTURE ADJUSTMENT

Several of the GIRM changes involve the postures of the congregation — kneeling, sitting and standing — and are specified in norm 43 of the document. Among these adjustments are:

- After preparation of the gifts and the priest's invocation beginning "Pray, brethren ...", it is now proper to stand, rather than sit, for the response ("May the Lord accept the sacrifice at our hands ..."). The faithful are to remain standing to the end of the Holy, Holy, Holy.

- It is proper to kneel, rather than stand, through singing or recitation of the Great Amen.

- It is proper to stand through the *Agnus Dei* ("Lamb of God") and continue standing until getting in line to receive Communion. This is arguably the stretch of Mass when confusion over posture has been greatest. Although the updated GIRM calls for kneeling during "Behold the Lamb of God/Lord I am not worthy," it also gives local bishops the option of making their own regulation for this portion of Mass. In this instance, Bishop Clark has approved a recommendation from the diocesan Liturgical Commission for the congregation to remain standing. The overriding philosophy, Workmaster said, is "to not break the posture of unity. There has to be a common posture."

In addition, GIRM revisions call for the communicant to make a small bow before receiving the host

and the cup.

The GIRM text states: "When receiving Holy Communion, the communicant bows his or her head before the sacrament as a gesture of reverence and receives the Body of the Lord from the minister. The consecrated host may be received either on the tongue or in the hand at the discretion of each communicant. When Holy Communion is received under both kinds, the sign of reverence is also made before receiving the precious blood" (GIRM n. 160).

"The overriding sense in the document is that we need to be as reverent as possible, to show our respect for the species (body and blood) by bowing," Workmaster said.

Whereas there continues to be no mandate for communicants to receive the blood of Christ, Workmaster said she hopes that the GIRM updates reflecting the importance of the practice will encourage people who abstain to reconsider their decision. The blood of Christ has been available to congregations since the 1975 GIRM revisions.

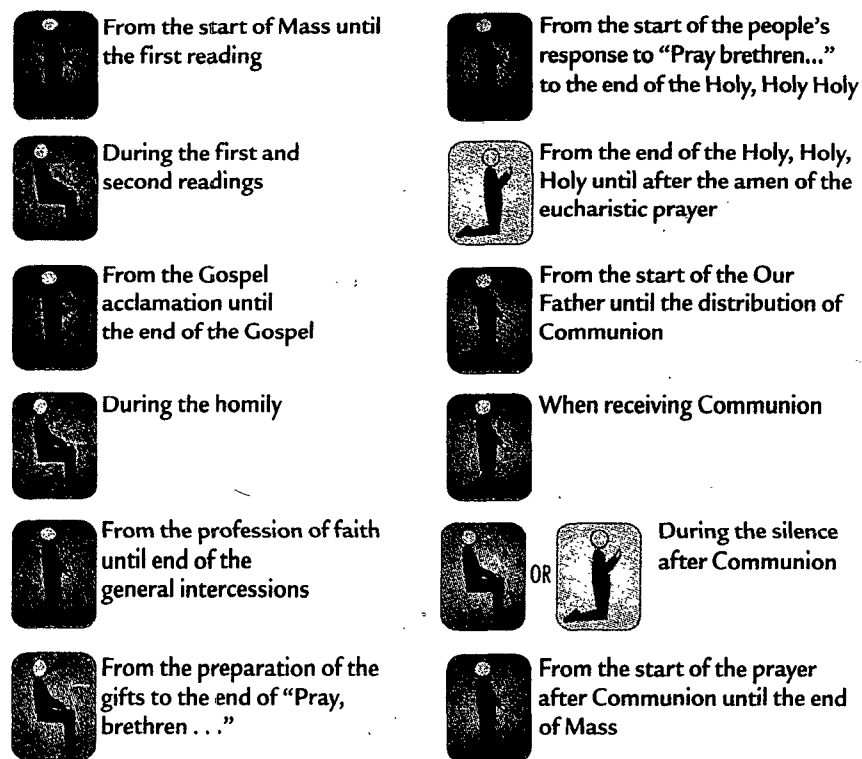
"The precious blood is as holy as the body," Workmaster stated.

Many of the GIRM changes involve liturgical ministers, particularly eucharistic ministers. Most significantly, these ministers are instructed to approach the sanctuary but not come to the altar until the priest has received Communion, and always to take the vessels from the priest rather than remove them from the altar (GIRM n. 162).

The actions of priests, as well, are subject to GIRM revisions. For instance, the updated GIRM makes clear that the priest should not leave the sanctuary during the sign of peace "lest the celebration be dis-

## Posture at Mass

Proper posture of the congregation at Mass in the Diocese of Rochester



Adapted from the newsletter of the U.S. Bishops' Committee on Liturgy. ©CNS Graphics

rupted" (GIRM n. 154). The only exception should be "if, for a good reason, he wishes to offer the sign of peace to a few of the faithful," such as immediate family members at weddings and funerals.

### REVERENT UNIFORMITY

Even before these revisions, Workmaster said many parishes and individuals probably had not been in perfect accordance with the previous GIRM. For the most part, she said, variation occurred because the English Mass is still relatively new and has not developed consistency.

"It was probably all we could do to keep abreast of all the Vatican II changes," she said.

She also said it's physically impossible for some of the GIRM guidelines to be followed across the board. For example, if a parish has no kneelers or someone is physically unable to kneel, the requirement to do so would be waived, she said. Similar flexibility should be given regarding a part of the Eucharistic Prayer that requires the deacon to kneel (n. 179). Workmaster said a deacon's physical condition should be factored in. "Use common sense. If you can't get up, don't go down," she remarked.

However, the granting of certain exceptions does not mean that parishes and individuals are free to maintain their own variations. Although they may have begun innocently enough, Workmaster stated, "there cannot be parishes initiating their own customs."

Along these lines, she observed that Bishop Clark has stipulated that deacons will no longer be permitted to intone "Let us proclaim the mystery of our faith" during the Eucharistic Prayer. Although the diocesan Liturgical Commission had asked for this custom to remain, Workmaster said the bishop decided otherwise because there was no basis for it in the GIRM.

Despite the complexity of this transitional phase, GIRM changes are not the only adjustments awaiting Catholic parishes. Within the next few years, Workmaster said, the Roman Missal itself will undergo changes based on its retranslation from Latin to English. This will likely precipitate the rewording of some responses during Mass.

Workmaster acknowledged that incorporation of such changes may be difficult at first, "but in the long term it will smooth itself out. That's the nature of ritual. When you do something over and over, it becomes ingrained and you don't even think about it anymore."

On the other hand, Workmaster hopes that as the GIRM updates take hold, the faithful will take time to reflect on the meaning behind their actions during Mass.

"All of it boils down to what people perceive as reverence," she said.

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** To review the full text of the revised General Instruction of the Roman Missal online, go to [www.usccb.org/liturgy/current/romanmissalind.htm](http://www.usccb.org/liturgy/current/romanmissalind.htm).



# Watch for it

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