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Preparing for Change

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The Roman Catholic Church in America will begin using a new Roman Missal — the ritual text for the celebration of the Mass — on Nov. 27. Parishioners can expect to hear significant differences in both the words of the priest and in the people's responses.

As a Marianist university that emphasizes education for adaptation and change, the University of Dayton is taking a proactive approach and employing new media to reach a wide range of people to prepare them for these changes, said Sister Angela Ann Zukowski, M.H.S.H., director of the University's Institute for Pastoral Initiatives and a professor of religious studies.

The University's Virtual Learning Community for Faith Formation is offering a five-week course to introduce the new Missal and prepare Catholics for the changes. The next session begins Aug. 7, followed by another beginning Sept. 25.

Register and get more information about the course online at http://vlc.udayton.edu. The cost is $90 or $40 for members of a partner diocese. A list of more than 50 partner dioceses is available at the VLCFF site.

"This course is intended for anyone interested in knowing more about why these changes are taking place, what they are going to look like and how the changes will affect how they actively participate in the updated liturgy," Zukowski said. "It's ideal for catechists and people who will be training others in their local parishes."

The course will be offered twice before the changes take effect and will continue to be available six times a year for the foreseeable future, Zukowski said.

The University has also partnered with the Archdiocese of Cincinnati to create a free, online audio program called "Beyond the Words." Co-hosts Emily Strand, director of liturgy at the University of Dayton, and Bob Wurzelbacher, associate director of the archdiocese's Office of Youth and Young Adult Ministry, answer questions, explain changes, uncover interesting bits of information and conduct interviews — all about the new Roman Missal.


"Anytime there is a change to ritual, it gives people what I call 'ritual whiplash,'" Strand said. "Ritual is a person's point of encounter with the holy, and when you change that, it can be very disconcerting. We want to help make this transition as smooth as possible."

The new Roman Missal is the third edition since it was first published in 1970, and the first major update in 36 years. According to the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, the new edition contains prayers for the celebration of recently canonized saints, additional prefaces for the Eucharistic prayers, additional Masses and Prayers for Various Needs and Intentions, and updated instructions for the celebration of the Mass. The English translation will also include updated translations of existing prayers, including some of the well-known responses and acclamations of the people.

"The updates will not change anything we do, just what we say," she said. "It's not going to look different, it's just going to sound different."

The first episode of "Beyond the Words" was released Feb. 24 and includes an exclusive interview with Cincinnati Archbishop Dennis Schnurr. Five more episodes have been added, featuring interviews with local high school and college students and focusing on language and the sacramental power of words.

The University of Dayton is taking to the Internet to prepare Catholics around the country for upcoming changes to the Catholic Mass, offering a free podcast and a low-cost online course.

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