

Catechism Update

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On Ten Years of Conformity Reviews

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The summer of 2006 will mark ten years since the USCCB Ad Hoc Committee to Oversee the Use of the Catechism undertook the first conformity review of catechetical materials. Such a milestone offers an appropriate moment for reflection on the process and its results. Those who have participated in this effort over the ten years know the achievements which the bishops and publishers have accomplished together. A constructive partnership has developed. Both bishops and publishers have learned a great deal and together have made a significant impact on catechetical efforts in the United States.

When the process was initially suggested and then undertaken, it is probable that many thought of it as a temporary measure to accomplish two things. One was to help the bishops assess how closely extant catechetical materials were in doctrinal conformity to the teaching of the Church as found in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. Secondly, the expectation was that the process would also help publishers appreciate how to use the *Catechism* as an authoritative resource in developing catechetical materials. However, as the years have progressed, bishops and publishers alike have come to recognize that a great value of the process is the bishops' direct involvement in the preparation of catechetical materials. Rather than a temporary measure, this engagement needs to be ongoing. The number of reviews taking place shows a sense of commitment to the process. During the early years, there was an average of eight to ten reviews each year. Now, the Committee is averaging thirty reviews annually. There is no reason to think that this volume will change any time soon.

After completion of the first year of conducting conformity reviews, the Catechism Committee determined that it would be helpful to identify recurring major deficiencies found in the materials reviewed. As those familiar with the history of this process know, these deficiencies included inadequate treatment on the Trinity, the divinity of Jesus Christ and his central role in salvation history, the Church and her teaching responsibility, Christian anthropology and God's saving initiative, the role and effects of grace, the Sacraments, Original Sin and sin in general, Catholic moral teaching, and eschatology. Naming these deficiencies

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proved to be a deciding moment for catechesis in this country. The recognition of specific problems in catechetical materials signaled the importance of the conformity review effort and offered guidance in the development of new catechetical materials.

The doctrinal content of catechetical materials cannot and should not be minimized. The development and use of texts and materials which communicate the doctrine of the Church in a complete and authentic, that is, correct fashion provides the best foundation for successful catechetical efforts. It is for this reason that from the onset of the conformity review process, the Committee made a decision to accept for review only those materials in which the doctrinal content appeared in the student portion of the text, series or program.

Within three or four years of conducting conformity reviews, the Committee recognized that there had been significant progress in strengthening the doctrinal content of catechetical materials, particularly with elementary materials. It was for this reason that in June of 2001, the Catechism Committee reported to the body of bishops that working with publishers of catechetical materials for elementary age students had proved so effective that the Catechism Committee saw no need for the bishops to consider developing their own catechetical series. In that same report, however, the Committee reserved judgment on the question of the bishops' developing their own high school age materials. This was for two reasons. First, at that point relatively few high school texts had been submitted for a conformity review. Second, of those which had, many were judged inadequate for consideration of a declaration of conformity.

As a result of the June 2001 report, more publishers of high school materials began submitting them to the Committee for a conformity review. The outcome was mixed. While many texts and materials received a declaration of conformity, a significant number of texts were found inadequate. Because a number of these texts were (and still are) in use in many schools and parishes, in November of 2003 the Catechism Committee made a new report to the bishops, this time on the state of some high school materials.

During the course of this report, bishops were told that some of the texts in use in high schools were relativistic in their approach to the Church and to faith. This could lead some students to believe that one religion or church is as good as another and that the Catholic Church is just one church among many equals. The report went on to state that some high school texts continue to exhibit inadequate treatment of the Trinity and that the doctrinal and moral teaching of the Church is sometimes presented in a tentative context. Other problems in some texts surfaced in the area of ecclesiology through an overemphasis on the role of the community and the Church sometimes presented as democratic or congregational in nature.

The report also alerted the bishops that in some high school texts the treatment of the Sacraments is flawed. It is not always clear that the seven Sacraments were instituted by Christ, that they are more than celebrations to mark special moments in life, and that the priest has a special role in sacramental ministry. In areas dealing with Catholic moral teaching, some texts evidenced a reluctance to name immoral behavior as sin, implied at times that moral right or wrong is a matter of personal decision, and encouraged practices of virtue and goodness primarily in order to make the world and one's life better, thus blurring the relationship between the moral life in this world and life in the world to come. Finally, bishops were told that some high school texts taught Scripture with too much reliance on one particular scientific method of interpretation which resulted in the implication that the Scriptures, to a large degree, are merely human texts. While these problems are now much less frequent in new texts submitted for conformity review, they are still common in many older texts currently in use.

The Catechism Committee continues to recognize ways to strengthen a text's conformity. When the Catechism Committee first began conducting conformity reviews, publishers were told that the review would concern only the doctrinal content and not matters of pedagogy or methodology. Gradually, the Committee recognized more clearly that some pedagogical and methodological approaches actually undermine the authentic presentation of doctrine.

For example, one common problem is a pedagogical approach designed to avoid offending non-Catholic students enrolled in Catholic schools. It became obvious to us that even though the texts and materials were presenting and explaining doctrine and morality correctly, it was done within a context which made it sound as if the doctrine was a matter of opinion and not based on truths revealed by God. Allowing doctrine or moral teaching to be understood as a matter of opinion, even if only implicitly, undermines its authentic presentation. Such an approach is even more problematic in a society in which our children and young people receive the message that each person must make up his or her own mind about what they believe and what is right and wrong.

Another methodological approach which can compromise an authentic presentation of doctrine and morals is one which relies primarily or even completely on what some call an anthropological experiential approach to catechesis, that is, one which relies too heavily on the human person and his or her own experiences. When a person's own experience becomes the foundational starting point of catechesis and sometimes also the measure against which authentic catechetical teaching is to be judged, the truth and objective reality of God's Revelation becomes blurred. God's Revelation is not subjective. The relativism common in our society can also be re-enforced through an anthropological experiential approach. Catechetical understanding can and should be enriched through reflection on human experience but it should never become the lens through which revealed faith is presented or judged. God has taken the initiative in revealing the truth about himself and his involvement in the history of salvation. He has sent his Son to redeem us. Subjectivism about Revelation leads to a relativistic teaching. Ultimately, it can undermine faith in and commitment to Christ.

There continue to be doctrinal issues with which the Catechism Committee works to strengthen the conformity of catechetical material. One area concerns Trinitarian language. The Committee is trying to develop helpful suggestions to insure that catechetical materials teach about the nature and revealed name of the First Person of the Trinity, God the Father, without losing a traditional understanding that the name God is also sometimes synonymous with God the Father. Another area involves materials which treat Church history. The Committee is developing guidelines to help publishers know how to create a text which is not merely a history, but a responsible catechetical treatment of the history of the Church.

A significant by-product of the work of the bishops on the Catechism Committee has been a renewed conviction and commitment on the part of all the bishops in this country in the oversight of catechetical teaching. Once the Catechism Committee began its work, other bishops, members of their diocesan staffs and catechetical publishers began bringing questions and concerns to the Committee which fell beyond the scope of the mandate entrusted to them. This led to the recognition of the need for a standing bishops' Committee on Catechesis, the proposal for which was approved by a vote of the bishops in 2000 and formally established in 2002.

The Catechism Committee, focused on the implementation of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, and the Committee on Catechesis, charged with the broader issues of catechesis, have been working to refine

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catechetical efforts so that all involved may understand better that they are meant to proclaim the faith in such a way as to lead others to want to have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and to know the teaching of the Lord and the Church. The Committees strive to offer bishops the tools and direction they want in order to fulfill their role as the chief catechists in their dioceses. It is the aim of these Committees to ensure that catechesis be not only organized and systematic but also authentic and complete.

All the work of these two Committees takes place within the larger context of the catechetical efforts of the Church both here in the United States and throughout the world. Their work reflects the call for a new evangelization, proclaiming the teachings of Jesus Christ in the modern world in such a way as to elicit a deeper understanding and commitment to Christ on the part of believers and to bring about conversion and faith on the part of those who do not yet believe. In this work of new evangelization, the Committees work to help bishops and the faithful rely on the tools for catechesis which the universal Church has given them in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, the *General Directory for Catechesis* and the *Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church*. In fulfillment of this mandate, these Committees have also overseen the development of the *National Directory for Catechesis* and the *United States Catholic Catechism for Adults*, tools developed by the Church in the United States to give further support and direction to catechetical efforts in this country.

It is only fair to admit that not everyone involved in catechesis agrees with the work and expectations of the bishops over the last ten years. But the vast majority of those involved in oversight or development of texts or in the day to day work of catechesis seem to appreciate more and more the work of the Catechism Committee and the Committee on Catechesis. They have come to trust the insight and direction provided. It is a reasonable hope that this collaborative work will continue to foster the renewal of catechesis and enable all involved to find the best ways, faithfully and responsibly, to hand on the faith to the present generation as well as those of the future.

Changes with Catechism Update

The newsletter called *Catechism Update* was first released by the Ad Hoc Committee to Oversee the Use of the Catechism in January of 1994 as a means of keeping the bishops of the United States current with news or developments regarding the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* which was formally released in English in June of that year. For three years, *Catechism Update* was released on a monthly basis. Beginning in 1997, *Catechism Update* became a quarterly publication sent to bishops, diocesan catechetical and educational leaders, and catechetical publishers. It has also been available on the Conference website.

Now that the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* has been in use for twelve years, news and developments relative to the *Catechism* occur less frequently. Consequently, the decision has been made to release *Catechism Update* only twice a year, in January and in July, rather than four times a year.

The section of *Catechism Update* which is most frequently consulted is the listing of texts and series which carry a declaration of conformity to the *Catechism*. This will still appear whenever *Catechism Update* is published. It will also be regularly updated on the Conference website (www.usccb.org/catechism/; see "List of Catechetical Texts in PDF" under "Conformity Reviews").

Committee to Hold Annual Meeting with Publishers

The Catechism Committee's annual Meeting with Catechetical Publishers is scheduled to take place on Thursday, September 7 in Chicago. As has been the case in the past, the bishops on the Committee will use this opportunity to update the publishers on issues or insights they have noticed while conducting conformity reviews. While the agenda for this year's meeting has not been finalized, the Committee has already identified some topics which they will address. These include:

- *The state of some materials submitted to the Committee:* Committee members will reiterate that materials submitted for conformity review need to be in their final form and should be fairly free of grammatical or print problems as this sometimes delays or complicates a review. Poorly prepared materials could be sent back to a publisher.
- *A change in the wording of a conformity statement:* Publishers receiving a declaration of conformity for material designed for use in sacramental preparation will notice a slight change in the wording.
- *Treatment of the Persons of the Trinity:* The Committee will try to help publishers avoid implications of modalism when the materials they present treat the three divine Persons.
- *Treatment of the Eucharist:* The Committee will address some problems they have seen in reviews concerning the way Jesus' presence in the Eucharist is explained.
- *Guidelines for Church history texts:* The Committee will share with publishers guidelines they have developed concerning what topics from the Catechism need to be included or referenced in a text on Church history.
- *Report from the Committee on Catechesis:* The publishers will be given updates on the projects of the Committee on Catechesis which would be of interest or concern to them.

A full agenda for the meeting will be sent to participants in late August. Additional topics are also often added during the meeting when publishers raise questions or seek clarification.

Update on the *United States Catholic Catechism for Adults*

The *United States Catholic Catechism for Adults* is expected to be officially released July 31, 2006. Copies can be ordered from USCCB Publishing by phone at 1-800-235-8722 or through the Conference website at www.usccbpublishing.org/.

Conformity Listing of Catechetical Texts and Series

As of June 26, 2006 the following texts and series have been found to be in conformity with the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.

Key to the Conformity Listing (Titles new to the listing are in bold.)

S=School Student Text P=Parish Student Text TM= Teacher Manual CM= Catechist Manual
 S/P= single edition applicable to both school and parish S&P= two separate editions, both found to be in conformity

Preschool Series

<i>Title</i>	<i>Publisher</i>	<i>Specifics</i>
Discovering God	William H. Sadlier, Inc.	S/P&TM/CM ©2000

Elementary Series: School and Parish

The Apostolate's Family Catechism	Apostolate for Family Consecration	S/P ©2003, ©2005
Blest Are We (1-6)	Silver Burdett Ginn	S&TM ©2004, P&CM ©2002
Blest Are We (7-8)	Silver Burdett Ginn	S&TM ©2005, P&CM ©2003
Call to Faith (K-6)	Harcourt Religion Publishers	S&TM, P&CM ©2005
Call to Faith (7-8)	Harcourt Religion Publishers	S/P&TM/CM ©2007
Call to Faith Junior High Faith Booklet Series	Harcourt Religion Publishers	S/P ©2007
Christ Jesus, the Way (K-6)	Benziger	S&TM, P&CM ©2003
Christ Jesus, the Way (7-8)	Benziger	S&TM, P&CM ©2004
Christ Our Life (K-8)	Loyola Press	S/P&TM ©1997&2002, CM ©1999
Come Follow Me (K-8)	Benziger	S/P, TM&CM ©1998
Coming to Faith (K-6)	William H. Sadlier, Inc.	S&TM ©1998, P&CM ©1999
Coming to Faith/Keystone Edition (K-6)	William H. Sadlier, Inc.	S&TM ©1998, P&CM ©1999
Consecration in Truth	Apostolate for Family Consecration	S/P&TM/CM ©2001
Faith and Life (1-8)	Ignatius Press	S&TM ©2003, 2002
Faith and Life (1-8)	Ignatius Press	S&TM ©1984-1987
Faith and Witness Program (7-8)	William H. Sadlier, Inc.	S&TM, P&CM ©1998-1999
Faith First (K-6)	RCL - Resources for Christian Living	S&TM, P&CM ©2001, 2000
Faith First (7-8)	RCL - Resources for Christian Living	S&TM, P&CM ©2001
Faith First Legacy Edition/Parish (K-8)	RCL - Resources for Christian Living	P&CM ©2006, S ©2007
Faith First Legacy Edition/School (1-8)	RCL - Resources for Christian Living	S&TM ©2007
Faith of the Mountain (1-8)	St. Maron's Publications	S&TM ©2000
Finding God: Our Response to God's Gifts (1-6)	Loyola Press	S&TM, P&CM ©2005
Friends of Jesus (7-9)	Legionaries of Christ	S ©2003
Image of God (K-8)	Ignatius Press	S&TM ©1986-1993
Knowing Our Catholic Faith: Beliefs and Traditions (1-8)	Loyola Press	S ©2000
One Faith, One Lord (7-8)	William H. Sadlier, Inc.	S&TM ©2003
Our Catholic Identity (1-8)	RCL - Resources for Christian Living	S ©1998
Share the Joy (K-6)	Benziger	S&TM ©1997
This is Our Faith (K-8)	Silver Burdett Ginn	S&TM ©1998
The Treasure of My Catholic Faith (1-6)	Circle Press	S ©2003
Walking by Faith (K-6)	Harcourt Religion Publishers	S/P, TM&CM ©1999
We Believe (K-6)	William H. Sadlier, Inc.	S&TM, P&CM ©2004

High School Texts

The Apostolate's Family Catechism	Apostolate for Family Consecration	S/P ©2003, ©2005
The Catholic Faith Handbook for Youth	Saint Mary's Press	S/P ©2004
Catholic Social Teaching: Learning and Living Justice	Ave Maria Press	S ©2001, ©2007
The Church: Our Story	Ave Maria Press	S ©1999, 2006
Encountering Jesus in the New Testament	Ave Maria Press	S ©2003
The History of the Church	Midwest Theological Forum	S ©2005
Introduction to Catholicism	Midwest Theological Forum	S&TM ©2003
Journey Through the New Testament	Harcourt Religion Publishers	S ©2006
Journey Through the Old Testament	Harcourt Religion Publishers	S ©2002, ©2006
Justice and Peace: Our Faith in Action	Harcourt Religion Publishers	S ©2007
The Light of Faith	Harcourt Religion Publishers	S ©2005
Living Justice and Peace	Saint Mary's Press	S ©2002
Morality: Our Response to God's Love	Harcourt Religion Publishers	S ©2005
The Old Testament: Our Call to Faith and Justice	Ave Maria Press	S ©2005
Our Catholic Faith: Living What We Believe	Ave Maria Press	S ©2006
Our Moral Life in Christ	Midwest Theological Forum	S&TM ©2003
Our Sacramental Life: Living and Worshiping in Christ	Ave Maria Press	S ©2003
Understanding the Scriptures	Midwest Theological Forum	S ©2005

High School Texts (continued)

<i>Title</i>	<i>Publisher</i>	<i>Specifics</i>
Written on Our Hearts (Old Testament)	Saint Mary's Press	S ©2002
Your Life in Christ: Foundations of Catholic Morality	Ave Maria Press	S ©2001

High School Series

Catholicism Series	C.R. Publications	S/P&TM ©1996-1997
Consecration in Truth	Apostolate for Family Consecration	S/P &TM/CM ©2001, ©2006
Dominican Series	Priory Press	S&TM ©2000
Friends of Jesus/Witnesses of Christ	Legionaries of Christ	S ©2003
Understanding the Catechism	RCL - Resources for Christian Living	S/P ©1999, TM ©1998

Sacramental Preparation Materials

Be Sealed	Pauline Books and Media	S/P&TM ©1998
Call to Celebrate: Eucharist	Harcourt Religion Publishers	S/P&TM/CM ©2007
Call to Celebrate: Reconciliation	Harcourt Religion Publishers	S/P&TM/CM ©2007
Call to Celebrate: Reconciliation and Eucharist (intermediate)	Harcourt Religion Publishers	S/P&TM/CM ©2007
Celebrating Our Faith: Confirmation	Harcourt Religion Publishers	S/P&TM ©2000
Celebrating Our Faith: Reconciliation and Eucharist	Harcourt Religion Publishers	S/P&TM ©2000
Celebrating Our Faith: Reconciliation and Eucharist (II)	Harcourt Religion Publishers	S/P&TM ©2002
Christ Our Life: Confirmed in the Spirit	Loyola Press	S/P&TM ©1997
Confirmation: Gifted with the Spirit (7-8)	Pflaum Publishing Group	S&TM ©2005
Confirmation: Receiving the Gift of the Spirit (9-12)	Pflaum Publishing Group	S&TM ©2005
Confirmed in a Faithful Community: Candidate's Handbook	Saint Mary's Press	S/P ©2006
Confirmed in a Faithful Community: Candidates Handbook (Immediate Preparation)	Saint Mary's Press	S/P ©2006
Confirmed in the Spirit (7-9)	Loyola Press	S/P&TM ©2007
Eucharist	RCL - Resources for Christian Living	S/P&TM ©2003
Eucharist: We Give Thanks and Praise (primary)	Benziger	S/P&TM ©2006
Eucharist: We Give Thanks and Praise (intermediate)	Benziger	S/P&TM ©2006
First Reconciliation	William H. Sadlier, Inc.	S/P&TM ©2000
First Eucharist	William H. Sadlier, Inc.	S/P&TM ©2000
The Gift of Eucharist	Silver Burdett Ginn	S/P&TM ©2000
The Gift of Reconciliation	Silver Burdett Ginn	S/P&TM ©2000
The Holy Mystery of First Communion	St. Maron's Publications	S/P ©2005
Image of God (Mass Books and Confirmation)	Ignatius Press	S/P&TM ©1986-1993
Jesus Brings Us Life	Pauline Books and Media	S/P&TM ©1996
Reconciliation	RCL - Resources for Christian Living	S/P&TM ©2003
Reconciliation: Pardon and Peace (primary)	Benziger	S/P&TM ©2006
Reconciliation: Pardon and Peace (intermediate)	Benziger	S/P&TM ©2006
Send Out Your Spirit	Ave Maria Press	S/P&TM ©2003
The Spirit Sets Us Free: Confirmation Prep for Youth	William H. Sadlier, Inc.	S/P&TM ©2000
Together in Jesus - Eucharist	Pflaum Publishing Group	S&TM ©2004
Together in Jesus - Reconciliation	Pflaum Publishing Group	S&TM ©2004
We Believe and Celebrate First Communion	William H. Sadlier, Inc.	S/P&TM/CM ©2006
We Believe and Celebrate First Penance	William H. Sadlier, Inc.	S/P&TM/CM ©2006

Materials in Other Languages

Acercandote a La Fe (K-6)	William H. Sadlier, Inc.	S&TM ©1999
Celebrar nuestro fe: Reconciliación y Eucaristía	Harcourt Religion Publishers	S/P ©2000
Celebrar nuestro fe: Reconciliación y Eucaristía (Nivel II)	Harcourt Religion Publishers	S/P ©2002
Creed: A Course on Catholic Faith	Vietnamese Catechetical Community USA.	S/P ©2000
Creemos/We Believe (K-6)	William H. Sadlier, Inc.	P&CM ©2005
Creemos y celebramos:	William H. Sadlier, Inc.	S/P ©2007
Primera Reconciliación y Primera Comunión		
Christo Jesús, el Camino (K-6)	Benziger	S&TM ©2003
El Espíritu Santo nos Libera:	William H. Sadlier, Inc.	S/P&TM/CM ©2000
Preparando a los jóvenes para la Confirmación		
Eucaristía	RCL - Resources for Christian Living	S/P&TM ©2003
Eucaristía: Damos gracias y alabanza	Benziger	S/P&TM/CM ©2006
Nuestra Identidad Católica (1-8)	RCL - Resources for Christian Living	S ©1998
Primera Reconciliación	William H. Sadlier, Inc.	S/P&TM ©2000
Primera Comunión	William H. Sadlier, Inc.	S/P&TM ©2000
Reconciliación	RCL - Resources for Christian Living	S/P&TM ©2003

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Materials in Other Languages (continued)		
<i>Title</i>	<i>Publisher</i>	<i>Specifics</i>
Reconciliación: Perdon y paz	Benziger	S/P&TM ©2006
The Spirit Sets Us Free: Confirmation Prep for Youth	Vietnamese Catechetical Community U.S.A.	S/P ©2001
Un llamado a celebrar: la Eucaristía	Harcourt Religion Publishers	S/P&TM ©2007
Un llamado a celebrar: la Reconciliación	Harcourt Religion Publishers	S/P&TM ©2007
Un llamado a la Fe (Level A-D)	Harcourt Religion Publishers	P&CM ©2005
Una sola fe un solo Señor (7-8)	William H. Sadlier, Inc.	S&TM ©2003
Unidos en Jesús Primera Eucaristía	Pflaum Publishing Group	S/P&TM ©2004
Unidos en Jesús Primera Reconciliación	Pflaum Publishing Group	S/P&TM ©2004
Supplemental Materials		
Benziger Family Life (K-8)	Benziger	S ©2001 (3rd printing)
Catholic Vision of Love (5-8)	Our Sunday Visitor	S&TM ©1996 (revised edition)
Growing in Love (K-8)	Harcourt Religion Publishers	S ©2001
New Corinthians Curriculum (K-8)	Foundation for the Family	TM and Parent Guide ©1996
Project Genesis (K-8)	Leaflet Missal Company	S&TM ©1996

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