

***Guidelines for the Treatment and the Interpretation
of Sacred Scripture in Catechetical Texts***
Subcommittee on the Catechism
United States Conference of Catholic Bishops
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Catechetical texts should present Sacred Scripture in conformity with the teaching of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. The “Christian faith is not a ‘religion of the book.’ Christianity is the religion of the ‘Word’ of God, a word which is not a written and mute word, but the Word which is incarnate and living” (CCC, 108) “Through all the words of Sacred Scripture, God speaks only one single Word, his one Utterance in whom he expresses himself completely.” (CCC, 102)

1. Sacred Scripture is inspired. “God chose certain men who, all the while he employed them in the task, made full use of their own faculties and power so that, though he acted in them and by them, it was as true authors that they consigned to writing whatever he wanted written, and no more.” (CCC, 106) Catechetical texts should, therefore, communicate an appreciation of Scripture as God’s word and recognize that human authors speak words open to deeper meaning because they speak in a living community, under God’s inspiration.
2. “The Second Vatican Council indicates three criteria for interpreting Scripture in accordance with the Spirit who inspired it” (CCC, 111)

2.1 “*Be especially attentive ‘to the content and unity of the whole Scripture’*” (CCC, 112)

2.1.1 “Different as the books which comprise it may be, Scripture is a unity by reason of the unity of God’s plan, of which Christ Jesus is the center and heart, open since his Passover.” (CCC, 112)

2.1.2 “The Old and New Testaments are to be treated and interpreted as a whole. The “New Testament lies hidden in the Old and the Old Testament is unveiled in the New.” (CCC 129; also cf. CCC 122)

2.1.3 Catechetical texts, therefore, should faithfully reflect this unity in teaching Sacred Scripture. The Old and New Testaments should be treated together.

2.2 “*Read the Scripture within ‘the living Tradition of the whole Church’*” (CCC, 113)

2.2.1 “According to a saying of the Fathers, Sacred Scripture is written principally in the Church’s heart, rather than in documents and records, for the Church carries in her Tradition the living memorial of God’s Word, and it is the Holy Spirit who gives her the spiritual interpretation of the Scripture...” (CCC, 113)

2.2.2 “It is the Church that believes first, and so bears, nourishes and sustains my faith” (CCC, 168)

2.2.3 The catechetical presentation of Sacred Scripture should indicate, then, the relationship between Scripture and the doctrines of the faith of the Church.

2.3 “*Be attentive to the analogy of faith*” By “analogy of faith” we mean the coherence of the truths of faith among themselves and within the whole plan of salvation” (CCC, 114). Catechetical texts need to provide a sense of this coherence.

3. There are multiple senses of Scripture:

3.1 “*The literal sense* is the meaning conveyed by the words of Scripture and discovered by exegesis, following the rules of sound interpretation: ‘All other senses of Sacred Scripture are based on the literal’” (CCC, 116). Scientific methodologies can help determine the literal sense, but should never become the focus of a catechetical text and thus obscure the other senses of Sacred Scripture. There are multiple senses of Scripture which need to be presented at the age appropriate level.

3.2 “The *spiritual sense*. Thanks to the unity of God’s plan, not only the text of Scripture, but also the realities and events about which it speaks can be signs.” (CCC, 117) Catechetical texts should recognize these spiritual meanings.

3.2.1 “The *allegorical sense*. We can acquire a more profound understanding of events by recognizing their significance in Christ...” (CCC, 117)

3.2.2 “The *moral sense*. The events reported in Scripture ought to lead us to act justly...” (CCC, 117)

3.2.3 The *anagogical sense* (Greek: *anagoge*, ‘leading’) We can view realities and events in terms of their eternal significance...” (CCC, 117)

It is hoped that these Guidelines will assist both writers and publishers in determining how best to treat Sacred Scripture in the presentation of doctrinal material and especially how to present catechetical texts on Sacred Scripture itself.