

LETTER TO CATECHETICAL PUBLISHERS

*on Criteria and Applicability
of the Conformity Review Process*

2013



United States
Conference of
Catholic Bishops

Subcommittee on
the Catechism



Subcommittee on the Catechism

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Dear Catechetical Publishers,

In the past, you indicated the difficulties associated with explaining to your customers in schools and diocesan offices why certain catechetical materials do not have a declaration of conformity, when the materials in question have not been judged by the Subcommittee to be deficient, but are simply ineligible for a conformity review.

In order to clarify eligibility of the conformity review process, the Subcommittee issued a letter on January 2010, entitled *The Conformity of Catechetical Materials with the Catechism of the Catholic Church: Criteria and Applicability*, which was shared on our USCCB site.

Following the September 5, 2013 meeting, the Subcommittee has amended this document to reflect the current standards of criteria and eligibility for the review process.

For further assistance, please contact the staff to the Subcommittee on the Catechism.

Thank you for your work in field of catechesis in our country. May the Lord continue to bless our endeavors.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Most Reverend Leonard P. Blair
Chairman, Subcommittee on the Catechism

cc: Peter Murphy, D.Min.
Carlos Taja
Alissa Thorell

**THE CONFORMITY OF CATECHETICAL MATERIALS
WITH THE *CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH*:
CRITERIA AND APPLICABILITY**

The Bishop members of the Subcommittee on the Catechism of the USCCB are charged with the responsibility of making a determination as to whether a given catechetical text or catechetical series is in conformity with the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. Catholic publishers voluntarily submit their catechetical materials to the Subcommittee for review.

A text is eligible for a conformity review if it falls into one of the following categories:

- 1) A religion textbook series for students in Catholic elementary schools and/or parish Religious Education programs;
- 2) A religion textbook series for junior high students in Catholic schools and/or parish Religious Education programs;
- 3) A religion textbook series or individual high school texts for students in Catholic high schools or parish Religious Education programs;
- 4) Teacher manuals or catechist manuals designed to accompany any of the above;
- 5) Student Religion workbooks that are part of a basal series;
- 6) Sacramental preparation materials that follow the Sacramental Preparation Protocols (working instruments approved in June 2013);
- 7) Supplemental materials which explicitly and consistently cross-reference an approved basal series.

The Subcommittee's conformity review process focuses primarily on the accuracy and completeness of doctrinal content, not catechetical methodology. However, the methodology employed can sometimes have a bearing on accuracy and completeness in a particular text.

The conformity review process leads to either a judgment of conformity or of non-conformity with the *Catechism*. Items judged to be in conformity appear on the "Conformity List" published by the Subcommittee.

If a given item fits one of the seven categories above and does not appear on the Subcommittee's "Conformity List," then either it has been judged not to be in conformity with the *Catechism* or the publisher has not submitted, or has not yet submitted, the item for the Subcommittee's review.

It is important to note, however, that not all catechetical texts and materials are subject to a conformity review. The fact that a given item does not appear on the Subcommittee's "Conformity List" does not necessarily mean that it has been reviewed and found to be deficient, or that the publisher has failed to submit it.

A conformity review is **not** applicable to materials that fall into one of the following categories:

- 1) Catechetical materials that provide doctrinal content in teacher or catechist manuals rather than in student materials. The Subcommittee will undertake a conformity review of teacher or catechist manuals only when they complement student materials that already have a declaration of conformity or are under review for conformity.
- 2) Catechetical materials that are published in the form of regularly updated leaflets or periodicals with frequently changing content. These include materials related to the Church's liturgical year.
- 3) Individual monographs which focus specifically on individual topics, teachings or devotions, including biblical commentaries and college level student texts.
- 4) Materials that include biological and physiological content along with catechetical content.
- 5) Digital media, including websites and DVD's.

Even if these materials are not eligible for a conformity review by the Subcommittee, individual bishops and their diocesan offices typically monitor and approve such catechetical materials for use in schools and parish catechetical programs.

It may also happen that the competent bishop will grant a *nihil obstat* or *imprimatur* to materials that meet the church's criteria for these declarations.