Boilerplate Language

Addressing Certain Doctrinal Elements in the Conformity Review Process

2016

United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

Subcommittee on the Catechism

October 12, 2016

Dear Catechetical Publishers,

During our annual meeting with you on September 5, 2013, the Subcommittee on the Catechism first made reference to a list of terms developed for review reports to address issues that arise with some frequency in texts submitted for review.

The Subcommittee offered to share the list of Boiler Plate language with the publishing community, so that you could be aware of the Subcommittee's concerns, prior to submitting a manuscript for conformity review.

The attached list was recently updated on September 8, 2016 with a new section for Biblical material containing two parts. The Subcommittee will alert the publishing community if any changes or additions are made. We hope this resource is helpful to your work.

Thank you for your contributions to the work of catechesis in service of the Church. May the Lord bless you abundantly.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Most Reverend Frank J. Caggiano
Chairman

1. **The Word of God:** The text needs to distinguish (more clearly) the Eternal Word of God who is the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, and the Word of God as written down in the inspired Scriptures.

2. **East and Latin Churches:** The correct terminology is not "Eastern Rite Churches" or "Latin Rite Church," but simply "Eastern Churches" and "Latin Church." Also, it is incorrect to identify the Latin Church alone with the Roman Catholic Church.

3. **Natural Reason:** While it is correct to say that revealed truths are to be believed because of the authority of God who reveals them, it is important to point out that the assent of faith is also in accord with what is known by the light of natural reason.

4. **Pentecost:** In accordance with the Tradition of the Church, the text must present the descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost as the manifestation of the Church, and teach that the twelve Apostles were anointed with the Holy Spirit on that day.

5. **Sacred Chrism**: As the term "Sacred or Holy Chrism" is used in the *Catechism*, in the liturgy, and in the rites for the administration of the sacraments, this proper name should also be used in catechetical texts.

6. **Single Life:** In order to be included among the Christian vocational states of life, "single life" must be qualified to include a personal consecration or commitment that takes on a permanent, celibate gift of self to God and neighbor.

7. **Symbolism and Metaphor**: The text must not characterize the doctrine of the Church as 'metaphor.' The text must teach that the Creed is a real and accurate presentation of God's saving Revelation. (Care must be taken not to confuse sign, symbol, metaphor and analogy.)

8. **Jesus Christ**: While it is legitimate in the context of dogmatic theology to refer to Jesus as a human being, it must be clarified that he is a divine Person who is true God and true man.

9. **Sexual Orientation**: In a catechetical text, it is not appropriate to single out, define or categorize a person based on sexual orientation.

10. **Original Holiness, Original Justice and the New Grace of Christ:**

    a. Prior to the Fall our first parents enjoyed both 'original holiness' and 'original justice' (e.g., freedom from death), CCC 374-379, 416.
    b. After the Fall the human race lost both original holiness and original justice, CCC 404, 418.

c. Those who receive the grace of Christ receive a holiness that is a greater blessing than original holiness but the gift of original justice is not restored to them, CCC 420, 1994 (regarding 'holiness'), 1264 (regarding 'justice').

11. **Divorce and Natural Marriage:** It is inaccurate to assert that the Church never allows divorce (CCC 2382). It is also inaccurate to imply that the repudiation of divorce by Christ is explained by the efficacy of sacramental grace. Valid natural marriage is not subject to natural divorce.

12. **Sacred Scripture:**

   I. **For Single Instances within a Text:**
      a. While acknowledging and teaching what the *Catechism* says in nos. 110 and 119 about Sacred Scripture, a catechetical text is not the place to present theories drawn from historical – critical exegesis about the origin of texts or the intentions of human writers, but rather to develop what the *Catechism* presents, including the senses of Scripture (nos. 115-118).
      b. The explanation of individual books of Scripture should focus on the final form of the biblical text in which it actually exists and its meaning in light of the canon as a whole (cf. CCC 120, 122, 124).
      c. Texts should avoid providing simply a chronological presentation of the sequence of persons and events with superficial commentary. The persons and events of the Old and New Testaments should be presented in light of the unfolding of God's salvific plan in Christ (cf. CCC 124).
      d. There are two senses of Scripture: the literal and the spiritual. In its teaching on Sacred Scripture, the text should allow the literal sense to serve as the foundation and door for teaching the spiritual sense of Sacred Scripture (cf. CCC 114-117).
      e. The spiritual sense is threefold: allegorical (typological), moral (instructional), and anagogical (eschatological), see *Catechism* no. 117.
      f. The text must present clear teaching concerning the inner unity of the Old and New Testaments in light of the mystery of Christ through typology (cf. CCC 128-30), and thus also apply the spiritual sense in its teaching on Scripture (cf. CCC 115-118).
      g. The historical context of the inspired author and all historical-critical methodology employed to explain the literal sense of a text should not undermine the historicity of God's saving actions in the biblical narrative nor the teaching that God is the author of Sacred Scripture (cf. CCC 105). Further, historical-critical theories should not be presented as facts (such as authorship, chronology, pseudepigraphy). The mystery of Christ must unite the presentation of the literal sense and open the door for the other senses of Scriptural interpretation. (cf. CCC 109-110)
      h. To name the Old Testament 'Hebrew Scriptures' does not reflect the language of the faith in regard to the Old Testament.

II. **For Thematic Deficiencies Throughout a Text:**
   a. Since Sacred Scripture is the inspired word of God, a catechetical text must apply the literal sense of Scripture from within the hermeneutic of faith, first by exposing the student directly to the text and its inter-textual/testamental connections; by locating the text within the unity of the divine plan through a Christological and typological reading of the text (cf. CCC 128-130); and by being attentive to the content and unity of the whole Scripture (cf. CCC 112). The text should use both historical-critical and literary-theological methodologies to help arrive at the sacred author's intention, guided by the analogy of faith (cf. CCC 109- 111). Historical and literary inquiry into questions of authorship, historical and social context, and culture is also necessary, but such historical/social constructs should be presented as plausible hypotheses rather than fact (i.e., the Q source, pseudepigraphy, authorship, chronology, etc.).
   b. **Application of the Literal Sense-** The literal sense must be applied in the interpretation of Scripture, but not to the exclusion of the spiritual senses (cf. CCC 117). 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: allegorical (typological), moral (instructional), and anagogical (eschatological). (cf. *Guidelines on the Interpretation of Sacred Scripture for Catechetical Texts #3.1*).
   c. **Unity between the Old and New Testament-** The text must indicate and explain the thematic intertestamental references (Old and New) to express the unity of Sacred Scripture (cf. CCC 112-114). This unity must be taught in light of the person of Christ, as the principle of unity of both Testaments, and thus leave open a connection between the literal sense and the spiritual sense (cf. CCC 129-130). The specific books of Sacred Scripture should be taught in the context salvation history's narrative (cf. CCC 112-114).

III. **Use of the term 'Story' for Biblical Texts:**
   When using the term 'story' or 'stories' to describe a book or passage of Sacred Scripture, the text must strengthen its presentation on the sacred and historical character of revelation as God's saving action in history. Any presentation on the literary genre of a biblical book or passage which serves to clarify the human authors' intention (cf. CCC 109-110) must always affirm that what is written in Sacred Scripture is ultimately "what God wanted to reveal to us by their (the human authors') words" (cf. CCC 109).