

HANDBOOK ON THE CONFORMITY REVIEW PROCESS

COMMITTEE ON EVANGELIZATION AND CATECHESIS
SUBCOMMITTEE ON THE CATECHISM

UNITED STATES CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS

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WASHINGTON, DC

The *Handbook on the Conformity Review Process* was developed as a resource by the Subcommittee on the Catechism at the direction of the Committee on Evangelization and Catechesis of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB). It was reviewed by the committee chairman, Bishop David L. Ricken, and the subcommittee chairman, Bishop Leonard P. Blair, and has been authorized for publication by the undersigned.

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To the Most Reverend Daniel Buechlein, OSB, archbishop emeritus of Indianapolis, whose dedicated leadership and inspired vision enabled the work of the Subcommittee on the Catechism to substantially improve the catechetical materials in use in the United States of America.

CONTENTS

<u>Introduction</u>	1
<u>History of the Efforts of the U.S. Bishops to Implement the Catechism of the Catholic Church</u>	3
<u>The Timeline for the Development of the Conformity Review Process</u>	5
<u>Purpose of the Conformity Review Process</u>	8
<u>Summary of the Conformity Review Process</u>	9
<u>The Structure of the Oversight of the Conformity Review Process</u>	14
<u>Conclusion</u>	15

INTRODUCTION

Our Holy Father, Pope Benedict XVI, has declared a Year of Faith to extend from October 11, 2012, until the Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, Universal King, on November 24, 2013. The starting date marks the fiftieth anniversary of the opening of the Second Vatican Council and the twentieth anniversary of the publication of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC). In his apostolic letter, *Porta Fidei*, proclaiming the Year of Faith, our Holy Father wrote, “In order to arrive at a systematic knowledge of the content of the faith, all can find in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* a precious and indispensable tool. It is one of the most important fruits of the Second Vatican Council. . . . It is in this sense that the Year of Faith will have to see a concerted effort to rediscover and study the fundamental content of the faith that receives its systematic and organic synthesis in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.”¹

Within the apostolic letter, Pope Benedict XVI “invited the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, by agreement with the competent Dicasteries of the Holy See, to draw up a *Note*, providing the Church and individual believers with some guidelines on how to live this Year of Faith in the most effective and appropriate ways, at the service of belief and evangelization.”² In light of that invitation, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF) issued the *Note with pastoral implications for the Year of Faith*, which

expressed the hope “that local catechisms and various catechetical supplements in use in the particular churches would be examined to ensure their complete conformity with the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.”³

In response to these recommendations for the Year of Faith, the Committee on Evangelization and Catechesis requested that a handbook on the conformity review process be prepared by its Subcommittee on the Catechism. The subcommittee is the Conference entity that has had the responsibility of reviewing catechetical materials as to their conformity with the CCC for almost twenty years.

The conformity review process itself has been an important and highly effective part of the catechetical efforts of the Church in the United States, especially as it has encouraged the development of catechetical materials that present the complete and authentic teaching of the Church. The work of the bishops in the United States in reviewing catechetical materials as to their conformity with the CCC has also succeeded in bringing a growing number of catechetical materials into conformity with the CCC.

The purpose of this *Handbook* is to provide a record of the efforts that have been made to implement the CCC in the United States in order to ensure the continuity of the work. The *Handbook* will present the history of the efforts of

1 Pope Benedict XVI, *Porta Fidei*, no. 11, October 17, 2011.

2 *Ibid.*, no. 12.

3 CDF, *Note with pastoral implications for the Year of Faith*, II, 9, January 6, 2012.

the U.S. bishops to implement the CCC, as well as the development, purpose, description, and structure of oversight for the conformity review

process. In this way, the *Handbook* will also help mark the twentieth anniversary of the publication of the CCC in the English language.

HISTORY OF THE EFFORTS OF THE U.S. BISHOPS TO IMPLEMENT THE *CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH*

In 1992, in light of the impending publication of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC), the bishops of the United States established an Ad Hoc Committee to Oversee the Implementation of the Catechism in the United States. The mandate of the ad hoc committee was twofold: to prepare for the reception of the CCC in the United States and to assist the bishops of the United States in planning its implementation in their (arch)dioceses.

After two years of successful efforts to provide a positive reception for the CCC, the bishops renamed and refocused the ad hoc committee they had established. The Ad Hoc Committee to Oversee the Implementation of the Catechism became the Ad Hoc Committee to Oversee the Use of the Catechism. In addition, the mandate of the ad hoc committee became refocused. Its responsibility was again twofold: (1) to review catechetical materials used in the parishes and schools of the (arch) dioceses of the United States as to their conformity with the CCC and (2) to supervise the use of the copyright for the CCC in the United States on behalf of the Holy See.

In order to keep the bishops fully informed of efforts to implement the CCC, the ad hoc committee began the publication, *Catechism Update*, in January 1994. At first *Catechism Update* was a monthly publication, but as the availability of digital means of communication increased and the need for printed information on the work of the ad hoc committee decreased, *Catechism Update* was published quarterly and then semi-annually.

In 1997 the ad hoc committee published *Doctrinal Elements for Elementary Grades Based on the Catechism of the Catholic Church*. It was a working instrument that sought to distribute the

fundamental content of the CCC as doctrinal elements for inclusion in catechetical material over the eight grades of elementary catechesis. It was intended for use by bishops, diocesan directors of religious education, and publishers of catechetical materials in the development of catechetical materials in conformity with the CCC. It is important to note that the *Doctrinal Elements* did not attempt to address, but left to publishers, things such as pedagogical considerations, age-appropriate language, examples, cultural adaptations, notes on child psychology, concrete applications, learner-based behavioral objectives, and formation goals, which a catechetical text would ordinarily include.

The USCCB established a standing Committee on Catechesis in November 2002 to address broader catechetical concerns beyond the mandate of the ad hoc committee. Prior to this time, catechetical concerns were addressed under the auspices of the bishops' Committee on Education. Under the aegis of the Committee on Catechesis, the USCCB authorized two substantive initiatives. The *National Directory for Catechesis* was published in 2005, and the *United States Catholic Catechism for Adults* was published in 2006. In the restructuring of the USCCB, the ad hoc committee became a subcommittee under the bishops' Committee on Evangelization and Catechesis in November 2007.

In 2007 *Doctrinal Elements of a Curriculum Framework for the Development of Catechetical Materials for Young People of High School Age* was published to assist diocesan offices of religious education and publishers in the development of secondary-level catechetical materials in conformity with the CCC. It was meant to guide the catechetical instruction of young people of high

school age wherever and however it takes place: in Catholic high schools, in parish religious education programs, with young people schooled at home, or within the context of a youth ministry program. It was designed to shape a four-year, eight-semester course of catechetical instruction and is composed of six semester-length themes, with room for a diocese or school to choose two additional elective subject themes.

In November 2011, *Guidelines for the Treatment and the Interpretation of Sacred Scripture in Catechetical Texts* was circulated. It urged the presentation of Sacred Scripture in conformity with the teaching of the CCC—that is, according to the three criteria the CCC offers for interpreting Sacred Scripture and the multiple senses of Sacred Scripture the CCC presents.

THE TIMELINE FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE CONFORMITY REVIEW PROCESS

1995

The bishops of the United States approved the establishment of the Office for the Catechism.

Based on their sense of the inadequacy of the content of the catechetical materials presently in use in the parishes and schools of the (arch)dioceses in the United States, the bishops began a study of the feasibility of preparing and publishing a catechetical series themselves.

In the meantime, the bishops decided to work with the existing publishers to ensure that catechetical materials were in conformity with the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC).

1996

A *Protocol* was developed for the review of catechetical materials as to their conformity with the CCC. The Administrative Committee of Bishops approved the *Protocol for Assessing the Conformity of Catechetical Materials with the Catechism of the Catholic Church* for use *ad experimentum*. The *Protocol* was sent to all the bishops of the United States for their approval.

The staff of the Office for the Catechism began accepting catechetical materials for review.

The Ad Hoc Committee to Oversee the Use of the Catechism met with the publishers of catechetical materials for the first time. Subsequently this has become an annual meeting.

The ad hoc committee began publishing the list of catechetical materials found to be in conformity with the CCC in *Catechism Update*.

1997

The home page of the ad hoc committee was launched on the website of the USCCB.

The chairman of the ad hoc committee reported to the General Assembly of Bishops on the progress of the ad hoc committee's work. The report described a pattern of ten doctrinal deficiencies that the ad hoc committee found rather common among the catechetical texts they had reviewed. Those deficiencies included (1) an insufficient attention to the Trinity and the Trinitarian structure of Catholic beliefs and teachings, (2) an obscured presentation of the centrality of Christ in salvation history and insufficient emphasis on the divinity of Christ, (3) an indistinct treatment of the ecclesial context of Catholic beliefs and magisterial teachings, (4) an inadequate sense of a distinctively Christian anthropology, (5) an insufficient emphasis on God's initiative in the world with a corresponding overemphasis on human action, (6) an insufficient recognition of the transforming effects of grace, (7) an inadequate presentation of the sacraments, (8) a deficient teaching on Original Sin and sin in general, (9) a meager exposition of Christian moral life, and (10) an inadequate presentation of eschatology.⁵

The Administrative Committee of Bishops approved the *Protocol for Assessing the Conformity of Catechetical Materials with the Catechism of the Catholic Church* as the standard review instrument

5 Oral Report to the General Assembly of Bishops, Archbishop Daniel Buechlein, chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee on the Catechism, June 19, 1997, pp. 1-4 (cf. Appendix).

for the Ad Hoc Committee to Oversee the Use of the Catechism.

The ad hoc committee met with the leadership of national catechetical associations, organizations and institutes to acquaint them with the work of the committee and to introduce the *Protocol* to them.

2001

The ad hoc committee reported to the body of bishops that working with publishers of catechetical materials for elementary age students had proven so effective that it saw no need for the conference of bishops to consider developing its own catechetical series.

2003

The chairman of the ad hoc committee reported to the General Assembly of Bishops on concerns about some high school texts. Those concerns included (1) a relativistic approach to the Church and faith, (2) the use of tentative language in the presentation of doctrine and Church teaching, (3) a flawed sacramental theology, (4) a reluctance to name certain human actions as sinful, (5) a studied avoidance of revealed proper names or personal pronouns for the Persons of the Blessed Trinity, (6) the exclusive reliance on the historical-critical method in the interpretation of Sacred Scripture, (7) an overemphasis on the role of the community in the Church to the exclusion of the hierarchy, and (8) a tendency to restrict the Church's moral teaching to social justice.⁶

Members of the body of bishops urged the ad hoc committee to develop a proposal to respond to their concerns. The ad hoc committee began to work on a curriculum framework for high school age students.

6 Oral Report to the General Assembly of Bishops, Archbishop Alfred Hughes, chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee on the Catechism, November 10, 2003, pp. 3-5 (cf. Appendix).

2004

The ad hoc committee began accepting preschool catechetical materials for review with the understanding that age-appropriate material would be assessed for completeness (only with respect to some fundamental points) and for authenticity.

2006

The chairman of the ad hoc committee reported to the General Assembly of Bishops on ten years of conducting conformity reviews of catechetical materials. The report summarized the expanding work of the ad hoc committee in reviewing catechetical materials for preschool and elementary age children and addressed the recurring difficulties being experienced with the catechetical materials for high school age young people. The report indicated (1) that the ad hoc committee is averaging over thirty reviews of catechetical texts and series annually; (2) that a constructive partnership has developed between bishops and the publishers of catechetical materials; (3) that there has been significant progress in strengthening the doctrinal content of catechetical materials, particularly elementary texts; (4) that more publishers of high school materials were submitting them for review; (5) that, while the problems evident in high school materials were less frequent in texts being submitted, they were still common in many older texts in use; (6) that sometimes the methodological approach used in a catechetical text could compromise an authentic presentation of doctrine and morals; and (7) that there was a renewed conviction and commitment on the part of all the bishops in the country in the oversight of catechetical teaching.⁷

2007

In light of these concerns, the subcommittee prepared a document, *Doctrinal Elements of a Curriculum*

7 Oral Report to the General Assembly of Bishops, Archbishop Alfred Hughes, chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee on the Catechism, June 26, 2006, pp. 1-4. (Cf. Appendix)

Framework for the Development of Catechetical Materials for Young People of High School Age. When presented to the USCCB, it was adopted unanimously.

2010

In response to the concerns of certain publishers about the marketing difficulties of texts lacking a conformity declaration, the subcommittee circulated a document to clarify which texts were eligible to receive a conformity review and which did not need to receive such a review: *The Conformity of Catechetical Materials with the Catechism of the Catholic Church—Criteria and Applicability*.⁷ Even

though such materials might not be eligible for a conformity review, they could still be submitted to the local bishop for an *imprimatur*.

2011

The Committee on Evangelization and Catechesis assigned the Subcommittee on the Catechism to use the *Protocol for Assessing the Conformity of Secondary School Materials with the Catechism of the Catholic Church* as the principal instrument for the review of secondary level catechetical texts to determine their conformity with the CCC.

7 Cf. pp. 18-19.

PURPOSE OF THE CONFORMITY REVIEW PROCESS

From the beginning, the fundamental purpose of the conformity review process has been to provide a more effective oversight of catechetical materials being used on the national level in the United States.

At the time of the implementation of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC), the general consensus among the bishops of the United States was that many of the catechetical materials in use in their (arch)dioceses did not present the doctrinal content of the Catholic faith completely or accurately. With the publication of the CCC, the bishops saw an opportunity to evaluate the doctrinal content of the catechetical materials used in their (arch)dioceses in light of the content of the CCC.

In order to achieve this goal, the bishops decided to develop a mechanism to assess the catechetical materials used in the parishes and schools of the (arch)dioceses of the United States as to their conformity with the CCC. A comparison of the doctrinal content of the catechetical materials with the CCC would bring to light any deficiencies in the catechetical materials and ensure authenticity. The addition of content either wholly or partially absent in the catechetical materials would bring the catechetical materials into conformity with the CCC and ensure completeness.

Thus the bishops became more directly involved in the preparation of catechetical materials and strengthened their collaboration with the publishers of these materials.

SUMMARY OF THE CONFORMITY REVIEW PROCESS

The episcopal conference established an oversight committee of its members to manage the review of catechetical materials as to their conformity with the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC). The Ad Hoc Committee to Oversee the Use of the Catechism was originally composed of a chairman and five members. It met at least four times per year.

The episcopal conference provided a clear mandate for the ad hoc committee's work. That mandate focused the ad hoc committee's efforts sharply on the review of catechetical materials as to their conformity with the CCC.

The episcopal conference provided adequate staff assistance for the project. That staff assistance included an executive director, a coordinator of assessment, and administrative support.

The ad hoc committee developed a voluntary and confidential process for the review of the catechetical materials. These two components of the process proved to be crucial for its success.

The publishers of the catechetical texts or series were free to submit their materials for review; they were not compelled to do so. If the materials were found to be in conformity with the CCC, they would receive a statement from the ad hoc committee verifying that finding, which they could then publicize. This was an obvious advantage to them when they sought to market and sell their texts to Catholic dioceses, parishes, and schools. The ad hoc committee also pledged to the publishers that the results of the review would not be made public unless the publishers chose to make them public. The fact that a publisher had submitted a text or series of texts was kept confidential by both the publisher and the ad hoc committee. The composition of the review teams, which the ad hoc committee formed for the evaluation of each text, was likewise kept confidential. The specific points

of the preliminary assessment of the catechetical text, as well as the final report of the review, were shared only with the publisher who had submitted the text. The ad hoc committee insisted, however, that, if a publisher chose to make the report public, the publisher would have to make the *whole* report public. If a catechetical text or series was found to be in conformity with the CCC, the publisher ordinarily included a statement to that effect on the title page of the text or series. Only then would the ad hoc committee list the text or series in its publication, *Catechism Update*, as having received a conformity judgment.

The ad hoc committee developed an instrument or *Protocol* (cf. Appendices) for the review of catechetical materials based on the CCC. The *Protocol* was constructed directly from the text of the CCC. Special, but not exclusive, consideration was given to the *in brief* summaries at the end of each section of the CCC.

The use of the *Protocol* in the review of catechetical materials depended on an understanding of several general points:

- As far as possible, the evaluative points of reference in the *Protocol* employed the language of the CCC in order to underscore the *Protocol's* dependence on it.
- The review process was primarily intended for a complete series of catechetical materials which encompass, for example, kindergarten–eighth grade, ninth–twelfth grade, or a catechuminate program. The review process, however, could be adapted for a single work or portions of a complete catechetical series.
- The assessment was concerned only with the content of the catechetical materials and, like the CCC, did not consider “the adaptation

of doctrinal presentations and catechetical methods.”⁹

- The review process and assessment presumed that all catechesis is a gradual unfolding of the deposit of faith and, consequently, that the Church’s teaching can be presented on a basic level in the early years and on a more advanced level in the later years.

The *Protocol* included general principles of criteria to ensure conformity with the basic theological structure of the CCC. The first principle was authenticity; the second was completeness.

In order for catechetical materials to be authentic, the following criteria had to be observed:

- Minimally, the catechetical materials had to contain nothing contradictory to the CCC.
- They had to encourage and assist in the development of a common language of faith within the Church.
- They had to promote a healthy and vital Catholic identity in such a way that the believer is encouraged to hear the message clearly, live it with conviction, and share it courageously with others.
- Since the CCC should not be reduced to its *in brief* sections, catechetical materials had to evidence the wider context of teaching from which the *in brief* sections are drawn.

In addition, in order for catechetical materials developed from the CCC to be authentic, the theological structure as indicated below had to be at least implicit in the catechetical materials:

- Trinitarian organization

The CCC does not simply address the Holy Trinity when it treats of God or expounds the Creed. The creative and saving initiative of God the Father, the salvific mission of God the Son, and the sanctifying role of God the Holy Spirit permeate the CCC’s treatment of worship, liturgy, and the life of grace underpinning the moral life and the life of prayer.

- Christological centrality

The CCC’s focus is on the person, life and mission of Jesus Christ. The entire CCC breaks open the mystery of the Word made flesh. Christ is presented as fully God and fully man. The content of the CCC leads to a living encounter with Christ.

- Ecclesial context

The CCC’s treatment of the Church is not restricted to a commentary on the article of faith in the Creed that focuses on the Church. The entire CCC presents the continuing presence and mission of Christ in and through the Church by the power of the Holy Spirit. Adherence to Christ through faith involves immersion in the life of the Church.

- Treatment of the sacraments within the Paschal Mystery

The CCC presents as an underlying and unifying motif in its treatment of the sacraments the Christian’s participation in the Paschal Mystery of Jesus Christ. Sacraments receive their origin and receive their efficacy in relationship to the Paschal mission of the Savior and his presence in the sacramental encounter with his people.

- Presentation of the moral life in the personal and social teachings of the Church as a new life in the Holy Spirit

The CCC makes clear that the moral life is not a merely human endeavor, nor is it simply a series of do’s and don’ts. It is rooted in a new level of life made possible by the presence of the Holy Spirit and the gift of grace within the human person.

- The Church’s teachings on the dignity of human life related to the section on the 5th Commandment

The Church’s teaching and commitment to life should be integrated into the treatment of moral life, and the nuances provided should show both the distinctive moral analysis of each life issue and the relationships of each of the various life issues to one another.

- The Church’s teachings on human sexuality related to the section on the 6th and 9th Commandments

9 CCC, no. 24.

The CCC treats human sexuality within the context of education in sexual morality. This arrangement, as subsequently reinforced in other Church documents, means that publishers should not develop separate segments on education on the physiology of human sexuality for catechetical purposes, but rather present all teaching on human sexuality within the body of moral teaching.

- The Church's teaching on social justice related to the section on the 7th and 10th Commandments

The CCC offers a succinct presentation of the Church's social doctrine, both in the introduction to the Commandments and in the treatment of the 7th and 10th Commandments. This presentation also preserves the relationship between social doctrine and the rest of the moral teaching of the Church.

In order for catechetical materials developed from the CCC to be considered complete, the presentation of the doctrines of the Church had to manifest an overall integration and an intrinsic cohesiveness:

- The materials had to reflect the four pillars of the CCC: such materials had to include the articles of the Creed, the sacraments, the Commandments, and the petitions of the Lord's Prayer.
- They also had to include an appropriate presentation of the origin of the teaching in Sacred Scripture.
- They had to reflect in an appropriate manner the variety and multiplicity of the sources of the faith found in the CCC (for example, the teachings from the Councils, the Eastern and Western Fathers, liturgical texts, and spiritual writings).
- They had to show that God's love is revealed primarily in the Word made flesh, Jesus Christ.
- They had to give proper importance to the biblical, anthropological, liturgical, moral, and spiritual, as well as to the ecumenical and missionary dimensions of the CCC.

These principles and criteria are the most fundamental ways in which catechetical materials were expected to reflect the CCC. They touch the underlying theological teaching and give spirit to the specific content that the evaluative points of reference set forth in a more concrete way.

The *Protocol* also included evaluative points of reference that are intended to guide both the review team and publishers in assessing the conformity of the catechetical materials to the CCC. Over 300 such points of reference are included in the *Protocol*. Each point of reference correlates to a particular paragraph from the CCC that is the source of that particular point of reference. For example, the evaluative point of reference, "Catechetical texts in conformity with the *Catechism* should present man as a religious being by nature and vocation," is taken directly from paragraph 44 of the CCC.

The ad hoc committee formed review teams, each of which consists of a bishop chairman and two theologians/catechists approved by the ad hoc committee. The members of the review team were given an orientation to the process by the staff of the ad hoc committee. The three members of the review team each used the *Protocol* as the basis for their review. When the members of the review team independently concluded their individual reviews, the bishop chair would combine them, with the help of the ad hoc committee staff, into one preliminary report. The bishop chair would then send his preliminary report to the ad hoc committee.

The conformity review process, as it now takes place, involves a series of ten steps:

1. The publisher of catechetical materials submits materials for review. The publisher first informs the staff of the subcommittee that the company intends to submit materials for review and provides a general introduction of the materials. Then the publisher conducts an internal review of the materials based on the *Protocol* before sending the texts to the subcommittee. The publisher includes that internal review with the materials it submits. The publisher allows six to twelve months for the completion of the initial review.

2. The staff members of the subcommittee administer the review process. They receive and initiate communication with the publishers of catechetical materials. They maintain strict confidentiality throughout the process. They do not disclose to anyone what series or texts are being reviewed. They decide whether the review will be conducted by a full review team (in the case of a new catechetical series) or conducted within the staff (in the case of a new edition of a catechetical series previously found to be in conformity with the CCC). The staff, in consultation with the chairman of the subcommittee, then assembles the review team, which is composed of a bishop chair and two theologians/catechists.
3. The review team conducts its assessment based on the *Protocol*. The staff provides assistance to the members of the review team throughout their assessment. The two theologians/catechists submit their independent reviews to the bishop chair. The bishop chair combines the reviews of the theologians/catechists with his own, with the help of the subcommittee staff. The bishop chair submits his preliminary report to the subcommittee. The staff then produces a draft report for the approval of the bishop chairman of the review team. The bishop chair then approves or amends the draft report and returns it to the subcommittee.
4. In preparation for the full subcommittee, the bishop members study the report of the bishop chair of the review team. At the meeting the subcommittee decides on what changes to the catechetical materials are to be required, recommended, or suggested and points out any errata they have found. The subcommittee then develops an initial review report.
5. The staff prepares the initial review report for transmittal to the publisher. The publisher then has the opportunity to respond to the initial review report and document how the required changes will be made. The staff then verifies that the required changes have been made. If the changes meet the requirements of the subcommittee, the staff makes a recommendation to the subcommittee chairman that a declaration of conformity will be issued to the publisher for the specific series or text reviewed.
6. The subcommittee chairman issues a declaration of conformity for the specific catechetical text or texts. This declaration of conformity given to catechetical materials does not constitute an endorsement of any series or text by the subcommittee or the episcopal conference. It merely indicates that a catechetical series or text is in conformity with the CCC.
7. The staff then releases a copy of the final review report only to the publisher who submitted the materials for review. If a publishing corporation wishes to release the conformity review report from the subcommittee, it is free to do so provided the report is released in its entirety.
8. Unless the publisher requests otherwise, the staff makes public the name of the text or texts that have received the declaration of conformity. Ordinarily, the staff includes the name of the catechetical text or series in the next issue of *Catechism Update* or on the website of the subcommittee.
9. The publisher places the declaration of conformity on the copyright page of the specific text.
10. The subcommittee keeps the episcopal conference appropriately informed of its work through periodic written documentation and oral reports to both its parent committee and the full body of bishops.

A Clarification Regarding the Eligibility of Catechetical Materials for a Conformity Review

The ad hoc committee developed criteria by which catechetical materials would be accepted for review: *The Conformity of Catechetical Materials with the Catechism of the Catholic Church: Criteria and Applicability*. 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 the above
5. Student religion workbooks

A conformity review would not be applicable for 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 ad hoc committee 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 in the process of a review for conformity.

2. Catechetical materials that are published in the form of regularly updated leaflets or periodicals with frequently changing content, including materials related to the Church's liturgical year
3. Individual monographs that focus specifically on individual topics, teachings, or devotions, including biblical commentaries and college-level student texts
4. Materials focused on chastity and human sexuality that include biological and physiological content in addition to catechetical content
5. Audio tapes, video tapes, websites, and DVDs or CD-ROMs

THE STRUCTURE OF THE OVERSIGHT OF THE CONFORMITY REVIEW PROCESS

There are four levels of oversight for the conformity review process: the General Assembly of Bishops, the Administrative Committee of Bishops, the Committee on Evangelization and Catechesis, and the Subcommittee on the Catechism.

1. The General Assembly of the USCCB initiated the mandate to review catechetical materials as to their conformity with the CCC. The General Assembly directed its Administrative Committee—a group of bishops who are either officers of the USCCB, chairmen of the committees of the episcopal conference, or representatives of regions of the country—to assign the project to the appropriate committee of the Conference.
2. The Administrative Committee assigned first the Committee on Education and, after the restructuring of the Conference, the Committee on Evangelization and Catechesis to supervise the conformity review process. The Committee on Evangelization and Catechesis makes semi-annual reports to the Administrative Committee.
3. The parent committee then assigned first the Ad Hoc Committee to Oversee the Use of the

Catechism and, after the restructuring of the Conference, the Subcommittee on the Catechism to undertake the conformity review process. The Subcommittee on the Catechism makes periodic reports to the parent committee.

4. The Subcommittee on the Catechism developed the process for the review of catechetical materials and supervises its implementation. The Subcommittee on the Catechism appoints the review teams, which consist of a bishop chair and two theologians/catechists. The review team conducts the initial assessment of the catechetical series or texts. The Subcommittee on the Catechism determines whether or not to declare a catechetical series or text is in conformity with the CCC.

Throughout the effort, the staff of the subcommittee provides administrative support for the conformity review process. The staff also maintains ongoing and direct contact with the publishers of the catechetical materials during the review process.

CONCLUSION

The conformity review process has proven to be an effective means to ensure that catechetical materials used in the (arch)dioceses and (arch)eparchies in the United States are in conformity with the CCC and has significantly improved the quality of these texts. It has involved bishops directly in the preparation of catechetical materials. It has helped publishers of catechetical materials understand how to use the CCC as an authoritative source in the preparation of those materials. And it has developed a favorable collaboration between bishops and publishers of catechetical materials on the preparation of materials in conformity with the CCC.

Many of the bishops of the United States have expressed their satisfaction with the results of the process. The number of catechetical materials that have been found to be in conformity with the CCC continues to grow. A majority of the (arch)dioceses in the United States now have policies in place that in choosing catechetical texts, only those that are eligible for a conformity review and have received a declaration of conformity may be used in parish-based or school programs. It is also significant to note that Eastern Churches have asked the subcommittee to review some catechetical texts. Three Maronite texts have now received declarations of conformity.

There are, however, still some challenges for the conformity review process. How to evaluate the conformity of catechetical materials that principally treat church history presents some challenges, because there is a unique focus needed in presenting Church history catechetically. The proliferation of supplemental catechetical materials, such as texts for sacramental preparation or monographs on select subjects, poses a challenge insofar as they

sometimes are used in practice in place of basal texts. In some situations the movement toward catechesis that does not rely on catechetical texts can be problematic. This is especially experienced with the proliferation of electronic learning. The increasing impact of this medium still needs to be more fully explored and better understood.

There are also signs of hope for the future of the conformity review process. The bishops of the United States express confidence in the effectiveness of the conformity review process by their continuing support of the work of the Subcommittee on the Catechism. The convocation of the Synod on the New Evangelization encourages the continuing renewal of catechesis begun by the publication of the CCC, the *General Catechetical Directory*, and the *Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church* by the Holy See and the publication of the *National Directory for Catechesis* and the *United States Catholic Catechism for Adults* by the USCCB. The designation of the Year of Faith assures “a concerted effort to rediscover and study the fundamental content of the faith that receives its systematic and organic synthesis in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.”¹⁰

At this moment in history, the Church has unprecedented opportunities to bring the Gospel of Jesus Christ to all people. By her vocation as the Mother of God, Mary is a singular model for the Church’s mission of evangelization and catechesis. May the Blessed Virgin Mary, the “Star of Evangelization,”¹¹ continue to inspire and enlighten our efforts “to make disciples of all nations.”¹²

10 Pope Benedict XVI, *Porta Fidei*, no. 11.

11 Pope Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, no. 82.

12 Mt 28:19.