



## Committee on Doctrine

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March 30, 2011

Your Eminence/Your Excellency,

In response to requests from bishops concerning the pastoral implications of the teaching in Sister Elizabeth Johnson, C.S.J.'s book, *Quest for the Living God: Mapping Frontiers in the Theology of God*, the Bishops' Committee on Doctrine, with the authorization of the Administrative Committee of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, issued a statement pointing out the theological and methodological inadequacies of the text finding that many of its conclusions are incompatible with authentic Catholic teaching.

The book in question, published some time ago, is not directed to professional theologians for theological speculation, but rather is used as a teaching instrument for undergraduate students, many of whom are looking for grounding in their Catholic faith.

The Bishops' Committee on Doctrine is first and foremost concerned about the spiritual welfare of those students using this book who may be led to assume that its content is authentic Catholic teaching.

Although an *imprimatur* is not required for all books that treat Sacred Scripture and theology, it is still a recommended practice (see c. 827 §3). By seeking an *imprimatur*, the author has the opportunity to engage in dialogue with the bishop concerning the Catholic teaching expressed in the book. Thus, clarifications concerning the text can be made prior to its publication. It would have been helpful if Sister Elizabeth Johnson had taken advantage of this opportunity.

The Bishops' Committee on Doctrine is always open to dialogue with theologians and would welcome an opportunity to discuss Sister Elizabeth's writings with her.

But it must be kept in mind that *Quest for the Living God: Mapping Frontiers in the Theology of God* has already been published and is being presented as Catholic teaching. The bishops have a responsibility for the spiritual well-being of the faithful and the oversight of authentic teaching. This statement is an effort to assist bishops in the exercise of their teaching office.

In the hope that this information is helpful and with every good wish, I am

Faithfully in Christ,

Donald Cardinal Wuerl  
Archbishop of Washington  
Chairman, Committee on Doctrine

Secretariat of Doctrine

Serving the Committee on Doctrine, and the Subcommittee on the Translation of Scripture Text