

## Appendix A

### THE APPROVAL OF CATECHISMS AND CATECHETICAL MATERIALS\*

*Report of a Joint Committee  
of the National Conference of Diocesan Directors  
of Religious Education, Catholic Theological Society of America,  
College Theology Society, and Canon Law Society of America*

#### INTRODUCTION

The Church has traditionally been concerned about materials used for catechesis, which is the process by which "the faith of the faithful becomes living, explicit and productive through formation in doctrine and the experience of Christian living."<sup>1</sup> This concern has been evident in contemporary efforts to develop modern catechetical materials, to draft new catechisms designed for diverse audiences, and to produce new types of audiovisual catechetical aids.

Special attention has been given in recent years to catechisms and catechetical materials. Some contemporary materials have encountered criticism from officials of the Apostolic See, even though necessary approval prior to publication had been granted by the proper diocesan authorities.<sup>2</sup> This has led to various ques-

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<sup>1</sup>This description of catechesis was given legal recognition in the 1983 Code of Canon Law; see c. 773. For a more developed concept see chapter two of the *General Catechetical Directory* (see below, note 5), and chapter two of *Sharing the Light of Faith* (below, note 12).

<sup>2</sup>Most notable are the cases of *Pierres Vivantes* in France and of Anthony Wilhelm's *Christ Among Us* in the United States. On the former see Berard L. Marthaler, "New From France: 'Catechesis of documents,'" *The Living Light* 18 (1981) 325-33; on the latter, see especially the December 10, 1984 letter by Archbishop Gerety to Bishop Malone, "Archbishop Explains Imprimatur Removal," *Origins* 14:28 (March 7, 1985) 619, 621-22.

tions about the approval of catechisms and catechetical materials: what are they, which of these require prior approval, who grants such approval and on the basis of what criteria?

Because of their professional interest in these matters and in continued fidelity to their commitment to service of the Church, a special joint committee to study these issues was formed by the National Conference of Diocesan Directors of Religious Education, the Catholic Theological Society of America, the College Theology Society, and the Canon Law Society of America. After initial discussions with the N.C.C.B. Bishops' Committee on Doctrine, the group was directed to work with the U.S.C.C. Committee on Education. The following report is submitted as a contribution to the ongoing study of the questions surrounding the approval of catechisms and catechetical materials, and is provided as a service to the members of the organizations constituting the special joint committee and to the U.S.C.C. Committee on Education.

This report has three major sections. The first explores the meaning of "catechisms and catechetical materials"; the second examines issues related to the approval of catechisms and catechetical materials for publication; the third explores their approval for use. The report attempts to provide a candid review of the situation as it now stands. Some evaluative comments are provided as concluding remarks.

## I. CATECHISMS AND CATECHETICAL MATERIALS

What are catechisms and catechetical materials? The question is not so easily answered. There are three steps in what follows: first, the context for this question in the teaching of the Magisterium at the Second Vatican Council will be explored; second, the continued relevance of the *General Catechetical Directory* on this issue will be discussed; finally, the various types of materials listed in the *Directory* will be explained.

### A. Context

At the First Vatican Council the bishops debated and eventually moved toward the adoption of a proposal to draw up a *Small Catechism* modelled after that of Cardinal Bellarmine.<sup>3</sup> It would have been a standard catechism for the elementary instruction of children. The council was not able to take a final vote on the proposal, however, and the project languished after the interruption of Vatican I in 1870. A similar proposal did surface during the preparations for Vatican II but it was turned down because conditions differ so greatly from country to country that a uniform catechism for the instruction of children was not considered feasible. Instead, the bishops at Vatican II voted in favor of a catechetical directory which

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<sup>3</sup>See Michael T. Donnellan, *Rationale for a Uniform Catechism: Vatican I to Vatican II*. Ph.D. dissertation in Religion and Religious Education at The Catholic University of America, 1972.

would "deal with the fundamental principles of such instruction, its arrangement, and the composition of books" for catechetical instruction.<sup>4</sup>

In addition to opting for a general directory instead of a children's catechism, Vatican II called for professional training for catechists, the restoration of the catechumenate, and the recognition of the close relationship between catechesis and the celebration of the liturgy. Catechetics, as it emerged from the council, is addressed to adults and youth as well as children, and requires adaptation to the condition of the audience (cultural and linguistic conditions as well as the condition of age).

It is in this context that later developments concerning catechisms and catechetical materials need to be understood.

### B. General Catechetical Directory

The Congregation for the Clergy, the office of the Roman Curia responsible for catechetics, responded to the directive of *Christus Dominus* 44 and, with the approval of Pope Paul VI on March 18, 1971, issued the *General Catechetical Directory*.<sup>5</sup> This directory provides "the basic principles of pastoral theology . . . by which pastoral action in the ministry of the word can be more fittingly directed and governed."<sup>6</sup> It contains a number of practical guidelines, and a significant summary of the doctrine to be imparted in catechesis.

The importance of the *General Catechetical Directory* was reiterated by Pope John Paul II in his 1979 apostolic exhortation on catechetics:

All who take on the heavy task of preparing these catechetical tools, especially catechism texts, can do so only with the approval of the pastors who have the authority to give it, and taking their inspiration as closely as possible from the General Catechetical Directory, which remains the standard of reference.<sup>7</sup>

The directory is a new form of canonical document, designed to implement basic church policy and law. It remains in effect under the 1983 Code of Canon Law, and would be affected by the new code only to the extent that any provisions of the directory might be contrary to a provision of the new law.<sup>8</sup> In effect the directory applies the law of the Church to catechetics.

<sup>4</sup>See the Decree on the Bishops' Pastoral Office in the Church, *Christus Dominus*, no. 44: AAS 58 (1966) 696. The directive to establish a General Catechetical Directory appears along with directives for other directories—on the care of souls, and on pastoral care of special groups of the faithful.

<sup>5</sup>Sacred Congregation for the Clergy, *Directorium catechisticum generale*, April 11, 1971: AAS 64 (1972) 97-176; English translation prepared and published by the United States Catholic Conference, *General Catechetical Directory* (Washington: USCC, 1971).

<sup>6</sup>Foreword to the *General Catechetical Directory*: AAS 64 (1972).

<sup>7</sup>Pope John Paul II, apostolic exhortation *Catechesi tradendae*, October 16, 1979, n. 50: AAS 71 (1979) 1317-18. Translation from "Apostolic Exhortation on Catechetics," *Origins* 9:21 (November 8, 1979) 341; italics added.

<sup>8</sup>See canons 6 and 33. There do not appear to be any items on which the *General Catechetical Directory* has been superseded by the new code. Moreover, the directory appears to comprise the chief prescriptions of the Apostolic See which are to be observed in catechetical matters (c. 775, §1).

### C. Types of Catechetical Materials

The *General Catechetical Directory* provides for a variety of materials to be used in catechesis.

1. *National Catechetical Directories.* These are to be drawn up by the various conferences of bishops and are "concerned with promoting and coordinating catechetical action in the territory of a region or nation, or even several nations of the same sociocultural condition."<sup>9</sup> The *General Catechetical Directory* leaves it up to these more local documents to apply general principles to the circumstances of a particular country or region.<sup>10</sup>

To adopt such a directory, every local ordinary in the territory is to be consulted, and the document must be submitted to the Apostolic See for approval before it is promulgated.<sup>11</sup> This process was followed by the N.C.C.B. in developing and adopting the national catechetical directory for the United States, *Sharing the Light of Faith*.<sup>12</sup> As the then president of the N.C.C.B., Archbishop John R. Quinn of San Francisco, stated in the Foreword to *An Official Commentary on Sharing the Light of Faith*,

This document, approved by the bishops of the United States and by the Sacred Congregation for the Clergy, sets forth official policy relating to the catechesis of all age groups in a variety of circumstances.<sup>13</sup>

2. *Programs.* Continuing Vatican II's shift toward a more comprehensive view of catechesis, the *General Catechetical Directory* next lists programs. These establish "educational goals to be attained according to ages or places or set times, the methodological criteria to be used, and the content to be taught in catechesis." In doing this, "care must be taken that the mysteries of faith to be believed by adults are already indicated in the programs for children's and adolescents' catechisms in a way adapted to their age."<sup>14</sup>

Programs, in effect, are to provide for an integrated, lifelong catechesis, and are to be adapted to the various age groups. No special norms are given for the adoption or approval of programs.

3. *Catechisms.* The *General Catechetical Directory* deals with catechisms in the following terms:

<sup>9</sup>*General Catechetical Directory*, n. 117: AAS 64 (1972) 165.

<sup>10</sup>See n. 103: AAS 64 (1972) 159; see also nn. 73, 77, 83: *ibid.*, pp. 143, 145-146, 149-150.

<sup>11</sup>*General Catechetical Directory*, n. 117: AAS 64 (1972) 165; see n. 134: *ibid.*, pp. 172-73.

<sup>12</sup>National Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Sharing the Light of Faith*, National Catechetical Directory for Catholics of the United States (Washington: USCC, 1979). Text approved by the N.C.C.B. at their General Meeting, November 14-17, 1977; approved by the Sacred Congregation for the Clergy, Second Office, October 30, 1978.

<sup>13</sup>U.S.C.C. Department of Education, *Sharing the Light of Faith: An Official Commentary* (Washington: USCC, 1981) 1.

<sup>14</sup>*General Catechetical Directory*, n. 118: AAS 64 (1972) 165-66.

The greatest importance must be attached to catechisms published by ecclesiastical authority. Their purpose is to provide, under a form that is condensed and practical, the witness of revelation and of Christian tradition as well as the chief principles which ought to be useful for catechetical activity, that is, for personal education in faith. The witness of tradition should be held in due esteem, and very great care must be taken to avoid presenting as doctrines of the faith special interpretations which are only private opinions or the views of some theological school. The doctrine of the Church must be presented faithfully. Here the norms set forth in Chapter I of Part Three are to be followed.

In view of the great difficulties in putting these works together and the great importance of these witnesses, it is most expedient that:

- a. there be collaboration by a number of experts in catechetics and in theology;
- b. there be consultation with specialists in other religious and human disciplines, and also with the other pastoral organizations;
- c. individual local ordinaries be consulted and their opinions carefully considered;
- d. limited experiments be tried before definitive publication; and
- e. these texts be duly reviewed after a certain period of time.<sup>15</sup>

The 1983 code indicates catechisms may be prepared under the authority of an individual bishop and of the conference of bishops (c. 775). If the latter group sees to the publication of a catechism, the work must first be approved by the Apostolic See (c. 775, §2); if the diocesan bishop does it for his diocese, prior approval from the Apostolic See is not required.

Two points should be noted from the description of catechisms in the *General Catechetical Directory* and from the prescriptions of the code.

First, works are classified as catechisms not because they conform to a particular genre (e.g., questions and answers), but because they are "published by ecclesiastical authority." In the case of *Pierres Vivantes*, despite the disclaimers of the French hierarchy and those who prepared it, Rome argued that it is a catechism precisely because it is an official publication of the French bishops.<sup>16</sup>

Second, care must be taken to distinguish clearly between the doctrines of the faith and "special interpretations which are only private opinions or the views of some theological school." One of the main criticisms of Anthony Wilhelm's *Christ Among Us*, for example, was that this distinction was not always maintained:

The Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith "does not agree that any work which cites individual theorists as though their views could supplant the teachings of the Church, can fairly be described as a true catechetical text, or in the author's (i.e., Wilhelm's) words, 'presentation of the Catholic faith.' It is because of this pervasive methodology that the SCDF does not consider the work to be revisable."<sup>17</sup>

4. *Textbooks*. Insisting once again that "no text can take the place of a live communication of the Christian message," the *General Catechetical Directory*

<sup>15</sup>*General Catechetical Directory*, n. 119; AAS 64 (1972) 166.

<sup>16</sup>See discussion in Marthaler, "New From France."

<sup>17</sup>Letter of Archbishop Gerety, 621. Emphasis added.

describes textbooks as "aids offered to the Christian Community that is engaged in catechesis" and observes:

nevertheless, the texts do have a great value in that they make it possible to present a fuller exposition of the witnesses of Christian tradition and of principles that foster catechetical activity.<sup>18</sup>

Textbooks differ from catechisms in that they are the work of private authors and are not issued by ecclesiastical authorities themselves. Yet it is not enough that books deal with religion from an historical or merely descriptive point of view, however objective, for them to qualify as textbooks for catechetics. *Catechesi tradendae* states that even though books of this kind "can make a contribution here to better mutual understanding" among people of different religions and various Christian confessions, nevertheless

such schoolbooks can obviously not be considered catechetical works: they lack both the witness of believers stating their faith to other believers, and an understanding of the Christian mysteries and of what is specific about Catholicism, as these are understood within the faith.<sup>19</sup>

5. *Manuals for Catechists*. The description of manuals for catechists in the *General Catechetical Directory* corresponds very closely to the major text series edited and marketed by American publishers. The directory says books of this kind should contain the following:

- a. an explanation of the message of salvation—constant reference must be made to the sources, and a clear distinction must be kept between those things which pertain to the faith and to the doctrine that must be held, and those things which are mere opinions of theologians;
- b. psychological and pedagogical advice;
- c. suggestions about methods.

Books and other printed materials intended for study and activity by those being taught should also be provided. These printed materials can be made part of the books for the use of those being taught, or they can be published as separate booklets. Finally, care should be taken to publish books for the use of parents, if the question is one of giving catechesis to children.<sup>20</sup>

6. *Audiovisual Aids, Mass Media, Programmed Instruction*. The *General Catechetical Directory* also speaks of audiovisual aids, the mass media, and "programmed instruction."<sup>21</sup> Although it addresses functions, correct use, and collaborative roles in regard to these materials, the directory says nothing about their contents and subject matter.

<sup>18</sup>*General Catechetical Directory*, n. 120: AAS 64 (1972) 166.

<sup>19</sup>*Catechesi tradendae*, n. 34: AAS 71 (1979) 1306-1307.

<sup>20</sup>*General Catechetical Directory*, n. 121: AAS 64 (1972) 167.

<sup>21</sup>*Ibid.*, nn. 122-24; AAS 64 (1972) 167-68.

## II. APPROVAL FOR PUBLICATION OF CATECHISMS AND CATECHETICAL MATERIALS

Catechisms and catechetical materials are subject to two types of approval. One concerns the publication of these materials; the other is relative to their use in individual dioceses. In this section the approval required for publication will be explained; the next section will deal with approval for use in a diocese.

In recent years the Church has modified its discipline concerning the censorship of books.<sup>22</sup> The prohibition of books has been discontinued. Although under the new norms fewer writings are subject to prior censorship or to the requirement of subsequent approval for specific uses, catechisms, catechetical materials, and textbooks do require such approval. The pertinent canons state:

Can. 775. §2. It is within the competence of the conference of bishops, with the prior approval of the Apostolic See, to see to it that catechisms are issued for its territory if such seems useful.

Can. 827. §1. With due regard for the prescription of can. 775, §2, catechisms and other writings dealing with catechetical formation or their translations need the approval of the local ordinary for their publication.

§2. books which treat questions of Sacred Scripture, theology, canon law, church history or which deal with religious or moral disciplines cannot be employed as the textbooks on which instruction is based in elementary, middle or higher schools unless they were published with the approval of the competent ecclesiastical authority or subsequently approved by it.

To understand what is involved in the approval for publication of catechisms and catechetical materials, four topics will be addressed: the notion of "approval"; the authority competent to approve various types of materials; the process for obtaining approval; and the criteria for determining to approve catechisms and catechetical materials.

### A. Notion of Approval

The canons do not use the term "imprimatur"; rather, they speak of "approval" (*approbatio*) and "permission" (*licentia*). Similarly the 1917 code referred to *licentia* and *approbatio*, although in the former code the two terms appear to apply to the same objects (i.e., the same writings), and the same juridic actions. In the new code, however, the two terms seem to be applied more systematically to specific types of writings, and to particular actions by ecclesiastical authorities.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>22</sup>S. Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, decree *Ecclesiae pastorum*, March 19, 1975: AAS 67 (1975) 281-84; English translation in *Canon Law Digest* 8: 991-96. The provisions of *Ecclesiae pastorum* have been substantially retained in the 1983 Code of Canon Law, cc. 822-32. For a detailed commentary on the current canon law governing the publication of books see James A. Coriden, "The End of the *Imprimatur*," *The Jurist* 44 (1984) 339-56.

<sup>23</sup>The distinction seems evident from analyzing the use of the two terms in the canons. There is no explicit statement in the law, however, claiming a technical difference between the two terms.

Permission (*licentia*) is required to cooperate with non-Catholics in preparing and publishing translations of Scripture, to publish prayer books, to publish books which will be placed on display, sold, or distributed within a church or oratory. *Licentia* is also required to reprint collections of decrees or acts issued by an ecclesiastical authority. Clerics or religious must obtain *licentia* in order to publish in newspapers, magazines or periodicals which are accustomed to attack openly the Catholic religion or good morals, and for members of religious institutes to publish any writings which deal with questions of religion or morals.<sup>24</sup>

Approval (*approbatio*), however, is required for Catholics to publish original versions or translations of Sacred Scripture, outside of the ecumenical collaboration mentioned above. It is also needed before publishing catechisms and textbooks, and must be obtained for books which have already been published and are now to be used as textbooks or are going to be displayed, sold or distributed in a church or oratory.<sup>25</sup>

It appears that underlying the differentiations in the canons is a view that *approbatio* reflects a greater commitment by the Church to the particular publication than *licentia* does. Those writings which require an *approbatio* are more intimately involved in the Church's representation of itself to others (Catholic-sponsored Scripture texts, catechisms, textbooks, existing items now to be distributed on church premises), and hence subject to greater control by church authorities.

All the materials described in the *General Catechetical Directory* require *approbatio*.<sup>26</sup> This reflects the understanding of such materials as being issued by ecclesiastical authorities or at least as witnessing to the faith in keeping with the Church's own self-understanding.

### B. The Authority Competent to Approve

The law distinguishes two different levels for approving distinct types of materials, the Apostolic See and the diocesan bishop. The conference of bishops is competent to draft various materials, but does not have a function of approving them.

1. *Apostolic See*. The Apostolic See itself is to provide *approbatio* for national directories and for catechisms which a conference of bishops arranges to be issued for its whole territory.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>24</sup>See cc. 825, §2; 826, §3; 827, §4; 828; 831, §1; 832.

<sup>25</sup>See cc. 825, §1; 827, §§1, 2 and 4.

<sup>26</sup>Although the 1983 code does not mention directories, the provisions of the *General Catechetical Directory* remain in force and so national directories must receive *approbatio* from the Apostolic See before they are promulgated; see *General Catechetical Directory*, n. 117; AAS 64 (1972) 165.

<sup>27</sup>Directories can be considered general executory decrees (c. 31); an authoritative interpretation issued by the Commission for the Authentic Interpretation of the Code in August, 1985 affirmed that such decrees must be given *recognitio* by the Apostolic See—see AAS 77 (1985) 771. While *recognitio* is not as strong an endorsement as *approbatio*, catechetical directories require the more specific *approbatio* in virtue of the *General Catechetical Directory*.



The Second Office of the Congregation for the Clergy "reviews and approves catechetical directories, catechisms, and programs for preaching the word of God produced by conferences of bishops."<sup>28</sup> The office does not act alone, however, for in "all questions which touch upon the doctrine of faith and morals or which are connected with the faith itself" pertain to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith.<sup>29</sup> Therefore, catechisms and catechetical materials are subject to review by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith prior to their approval by the Congregation for the Clergy.<sup>30</sup>

2. *Local Ordinary*. The diocesan bishop may issue a catechism on his own authority. He does not need approval from some other authority, provided the catechism is within the prescriptions of the Apostolic See such as the *General Catechetical Directory*,<sup>31</sup> and the further norms adopted by the conference of bishops, such as *Sharing the Light of Faith*.<sup>32</sup>

If others prepare a catechism, since by definition catechisms are "published by ecclesiastical authority" the approval of an ecclesiastical authority is required. The local ordinary is competent to grant this (c. 827, §1); i.e., not only the diocesan bishop, but also vicars general and episcopal vicars acting within the scope of their responsibilities.<sup>33</sup>

For other catechetical materials—programs, textbooks, manuals for catechists, and audiovisual aids—approval is also required, and this approval is to come from the local ordinary (c. 827, §§1 and 2).

The ordinary may be of the locality where the author has a domicile or quasi-domicile, or of the locality where the work is published (c. 824, §1). Traditionally the latter includes the ordinary of the place where the publisher has an office, as well as the place where the actual printing is done.

<sup>28</sup>*General Catechetical Directory*, n. 134: AAS 64 (1972) 172-73. See Paul VI, apostolic constitution *Regimini Ecclesiae universae*, August 15, 1967, n. 69, 2°: AAS 59 (1967) 911; English translation in *CLD* 6: 342.

<sup>29</sup>*Regimini Ecclesiae universae*, n. 31: AAS 59 (1967) 897; *CLD* 6: 330.

<sup>30</sup>The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, according to reports describing the revisions and final approval of *Pierres Vivantes*, exercised an important if not dominant role. See René Marlé, "La refonte de *Pierres Vivantes*," *Etudes* 363/5 (1985) 533-40. This is also evident in the case of *Christ Among Us*, for it was this congregation which intervened directly with Archbishop Gerety; see his letter, pp. 619, 621.

<sup>31</sup>See c. 775, §1: "While observing the prescriptions of the Apostolic See it is the responsibility of the diocesan bishop to issue norms concerning catechetics and to make provision that suitable instruments for catechesis are available, even by preparing a catechism, if such seems appropriate, and by fostering and coordinating catechetical endeavors."

<sup>32</sup>On the authority of the national catechetical directory, see *Sharing the Light of Faith*, n. 7.

<sup>33</sup>According to c. 134 diocesan bishops and those who are equivalent to them in law (so, also a diocesan administrator), vicars general and episcopal vicars are all "ordinaries" in law, and indeed are "local ordinaries." The powers of an episcopal vicar are the same as those of a vicar general, but only for the territory, business or persons for whom he has been appointed (c. 479, §2), and the diocesan bishop could explicitly limit the authority of the vicars (general and/or episcopal) relative to approving books (c. 479, §§1 and 2).

### C. Process for Obtaining Approval

The procedures for obtaining approval from the Apostolic See for publications of the conference of bishops have not been published. To obtain approval from the local ordinary, the law does provide the basic procedures to be followed.<sup>34</sup>

1. *Submission of Materials.* For catechisms and catechetical materials other than textbooks, the approval must be obtained prior to publication. Manuscripts or printed proofs can be submitted. For textbooks, approval must be obtained before the work is used as a textbook, although it may have been published already. Manuscripts or printed proofs can be submitted prior to publication, or the printed work itself may be submitted after publication.

These are normally submitted to the local ordinary from whom the approval is being sought. It is up to this ordinary to see to the next steps.

2. *Review by Censor.* A person other than the local ordinary is to review the submitted material. This "censor" may be selected by the local ordinary from among a list provided by the conference of bishops, but he is not limited to such a list.<sup>35</sup> The law does not specify any qualifications for the censor, who may be cleric or lay, woman or man. The person must obviously be able to exercise judgment and ought to have a good understanding of the Church's teaching concerning faith and morals as it is proposed by the ecclesiastical magisterium (c. 830, §2).

The censor renders an opinion about the submitted material. The opinion must be given in writing (c. 830, §3). If it is favorable, it constitutes the "nihil obstat," clearing the way for the local ordinary to decide whether to grant his approval to the work.

If the censor's opinion is not favorable, he must give his reasons for disapproving of the submitted material. The local ordinary is not free to decide whether to grant his approval, although he could entrust the work to another censor for a second opinion.<sup>36</sup>

3. *Approval by Local Ordinary.* If a censor has granted a "nihil obstat," the local ordinary must decide whether to grant the requested approval. If he decides to do so, he must issue a written document giving the approval. In addition to the name of the work and its author, the ordinary must include in the document his own name, the date and place where it was issued (c. 380, §3), and he is to sign it.

If the ordinary decides not to grant the approval, he is to communicate his reasons for doing so to the author. The law does not require this be done in writing, although for the sake of the record it is preferable that it be in writing.

<sup>34</sup>While the 1983 code does not spell this out in detail, the provisions of c. 830, §§2 and 3 provide the basis for what follows.

<sup>35</sup>The N.C.C.B. Committee on Doctrine has discussed the possibility of preparing such a list, but nothing has been made public as of the writing of this Report.

<sup>36</sup>That is, the ordinary freely chooses censors, and is not limited to using only one censor; he may continue to have the work examined until a censor gives his *nihil obstat*. The *nihil obstat* does not result automatically in the ordinary granting approval; that is a distinct judgment entrusted to the local ordinary alone.

If one ordinary denies the approval, it is possible to seek approval from a different ordinary but the norms on rescripts must be followed.<sup>37</sup> The new ordinary must be informed of the earlier denial and is to seek the reasons for it before deciding whether to grant approval.

4. *Publication.* The usual practice is to include mention of the *nihil obstat* and approval when the work is published. Frequently for books this is done on the reverse of the title page, where copyright information is also printed. However, the law does not require this explicitly, and for works which receive approval after they have been published it is obviously not required to insert the mention of approval in the copies already published.

Since the approval is always to be given in writing, it is possible to obtain confirmation that a work has received the necessary approval by contacting the author or publisher even if the published work does not contain this information itself.

#### D. Criteria

General criteria are provided for all works submitted to a censor:

In undertaking the office, the censor, laying aside any respect for persons, is to consider only the teaching of the Church concerning faith and morals as it is proposed by the ecclesiastical magisterium.<sup>38</sup>

In addition, specific criteria apply to approving catechisms and catechetical materials.<sup>39</sup>

1. *Normative Criteria.* Some normative criteria have been provided in the directories published for the Church universal and for the United States.

<sup>37</sup>See c. 65. If the approval is denied by a diocesan bishop, it cannot be obtained from any of his vicars without his consent, and before seeking it from an ordinary in a different diocese the earlier denial should be mentioned (and the second ordinary should seek the reasons for denial from the bishop). If approval is denied by a vicar general or episcopal vicar, no other vicar of the same bishop can grant it, and the diocesan bishop cannot grant it validly unless he is informed that one of his vicars has already denied approval of the work.

<sup>38</sup>Canon 830, §2. It is debated whether this establishes a narrower base for making the judgment of suitability. Some see in it the abrogation of the additional grounds listed in the 1917 code, c. 1393, §2: "... is to consider only the dogma of the Church and common Catholic doctrine which is contained in the decrees of general councils and the constitutions or prescriptions of the Apostolic See, and the consensus of approved authors'" (emphasis added to indicate additional grounds). Others see only a rephrasing which does not exclude the possibility of accepting the diversity of views admissible within the various schools of Catholic thought. See discussion in Coriden, pp. 351-352 and note 50.

<sup>39</sup>See the response of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith of July 7, 1983, to questions posed by the French bishops' conference. "If approval is requested *only for the publication* of a catechism, without implying the adoption of the book as the official text for diocesan catechesis, this must be given according to the criteria which govern the prior censorship of books submitted to the judgment of the ordinary; that is, taking account especially of the orthodoxy of its content and the universal ecclesiastical norms concerning catechesis (new code, c. 823, §1; 830, §2; *General Catechetical Directory*, n. 119; preamble, §6)." AAS 76 (1984) 52. Emphasis in original.

a. *General Catechetical Directory*. As indicated above in discussing the various types of materials, specific elements for most of them are given in the directory. The decision to approve a given work requires that it comply with those elements proper to its genre (see discussion above).

In addition, the directory provides norms governing all catechesis. "The doctrine of the Church must be presented faithfully" according to "the norms set forth in Chapter I of Part Three" (nn. 37-46).<sup>40</sup> These same norms are incorporated in summary form in *Sharing the Light of Faith* (n. 47).

Beginning with the notion of revelation, which it describes as "the manifestation of the mystery of God and of his saving action in history," these norms state that it is the task of the Church's prophetic ministry to make the content of this message intelligible so that individuals "may be converted to God through Christ, (and) that they may interpret their whole life in the light of faith."<sup>41</sup> Catechesis must lead to the presentation of "the entire treasure of the Christian message."<sup>42</sup> While emphasizing that the content of the Christian message forms a certain organic whole,<sup>43</sup> the Church also recognizes "a certain hierarchy of truths" in which such tenets as found in the ancient creeds are considered basic.<sup>44</sup>

Catechesis must necessarily be Christocentric<sup>45</sup> and at the same time trinitarian. To neglect the integrity of mystery latent in the phrase "through Christ, to the Father, in the Spirit," is to rob the Christian message of its proper character.<sup>46</sup> The directory cites Vatican I in asserting that one of the conditions required for "a fruitful understanding" of the purpose of the economy of salvation is that the diverse Christian truths be related to human beings' ultimate destiny.<sup>47</sup> Although the mystery of salvation "awaits its consummation in the future," catechesis should enable people to see how it is realized in the past in the incarnation, death and resurrection of Christ, and in the present through the Holy Spirit and the ministry of the Church.<sup>48</sup>

Despite the fact that there is a definite corpus of material that must be taught, the directory acknowledges it is not possible to dictate a particular order that must be followed; circumstances must be taken into account in selecting a pedagogical method.<sup>49</sup>

b. *Sharing the Light of Faith*. In the United States, any materials submitted for approval must also meet the criteria contained in the national catechetical directory adopted by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops and approved by

<sup>40</sup>*General Catechetical Directory*, n. 119; AAS 64 (1972) 166.

<sup>41</sup>*Ibid.*, n. 37; p. 120.

<sup>42</sup>*Ibid.*, n. 38; p. 120.

<sup>43</sup>*Ibid.*, n. 39; p. 120.

<sup>44</sup>*Ibid.*, n. 43; p. 123.

<sup>45</sup>*Ibid.*, n. 40; p. 122.

<sup>46</sup>*Ibid.*, n. 41; p. 122.

<sup>47</sup>*Ibid.*, n. 42; p. 123.

<sup>48</sup>*Ibid.*, nn. 44-45; pp. 123-24.

<sup>49</sup>*Ibid.*, n. 46; pp. 124-25.

the Apostolic See. The "Norms of Catechesis" drawn from the *General Catechetical Directory* and stated in n. 47 of *Sharing the Light of Faith* must be observed.<sup>50</sup> Additional norms are provided in Chapter XI, "Catechetical Resources."

2. *Other Criteria.* Other criteria have been suggested in official documents, or have been used in individual cases without thereby establishing a norm which must be followed in all cases.

a. *Catechesi tradendae.* An apostolic exhortation is exhortatory rather than legislative in nature; it does not establish binding norms, but rather sets forth the views of the pope on the matter under discussion and expresses encouragement for those engaged in the pastoral work of the Church. Nevertheless, the views expressed by Pope John Paul II in his apostolic exhortation on catechetics aid in clarifying the criteria mentioned in the *General Catechetical Directory* and in *Sharing the Light of Faith*.

John Paul II states several conditions which he considers essential in catechetical literature:

(1) They must be linked with the real life of the generation to which they are addressed, showing close acquaintance with its anxieties and questionings, struggles and hopes; (2) They must try to speak a language comprehensible to the generation in question; (3) They must make a point of giving the whole message of Christ and his Church, without neglecting or distorting anything, and in expounding it they will follow a line and structure that highlights what is essential; (4) They must really aim to give to those who use them a better knowledge of the mysteries of Christ, aimed at true conversion and a life more in conformity with God's will.<sup>51</sup>

b. *Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith.* As noted above, the Congregation for the Clergy has the specific competence to oversee catechisms and catechetical materials. However, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith is also competent in these matters insofar as questions of faith and morals may be involved.

In 1983 the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith responded to an inquiry from the French bishops' conference. The bishops had asked if an ordinary had to grant approval to a book intended for catechetical use if the book contained nothing contrary to faith and morals, independently of any evaluation of the work's value for catechetical use. It seems some editors had been claiming a right to the approval when there was no objection to the faith and morals content. The congregation replied that when it is only a question of approval a book for publication—and not a question of whether the bishop is adopting the book officially for

<sup>50</sup>The obligatory force of these norms is stated in the introductory discussion on authority; see *Sharing the Light of Faith*, n. 7. On the other hand, it could be argued from the July 7, 1983 response discussed below from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith—AAS 76 (1984) 52—that the norms of the national directory do not have to be taken into consideration in approving texts not intended as an official diocesan catechism. Yet the universal norms refer specifically to national norms, so at least in virtue of the *General Catechetical Directory* the national directory must also be taken into consideration; see nn. 103 and 117: AAS 64 (1972) 159, 165.

<sup>51</sup>*Catechesi tradendae*, n. 49: AAS 71 (1979) 1317.

his diocese—then he is to consider the orthodoxy of its content and the universal ecclesiastical norms concerning catechetics.<sup>52</sup>

In addition to this general response there are two reported interventions of this congregation in catechetical matters which illustrate the approach officials of this office have taken.

In dealing with the book *Christ Among Us* the congregation's objections focused on methodology and content.

1) A book cannot be considered to be a presentation of the Catholic faith if it "cites individual theorists as though their views could supplant the teachings of the Church." 2) With regard to content, a number of individual points were raised which the congregation considered inconsistent with Catholic teaching, particularly if the book is to be considered a presentation of Catholic teaching.<sup>53</sup>

In its evaluation of *Pierres Vivantes* the congregation objected to the manner in which the work made use of contemporary biblical scholarship, preferring instead a more "traditional" approach in presenting salvation history. In the first edition, *Pierres Vivantes* traced the historical development of the people of God from Exodus, whereas the canonical scriptures begin with creation. It traced the historical development of the New Testament from the Pentecost experience in the Acts of the Apostles rather than beginning with the infancy narrative.<sup>54</sup>

c. *Cardinal Ratzinger*. Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger's position as Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith has given his personal views on catechetics added attention. He has expressed these views at lectures in Lyons and Paris in 1983<sup>55</sup> and in various interviews.<sup>56</sup> The latter highlights the following concerns.

(1) The catechist's own faith (p. 147): The catechist is pivotal in the process of catechesis. "Only one who believes can lead another to believe" (p. 148). In the case of catechetical materials, the author's ecclesiastical status may be an extrinsic factor in the approval or disapproval of texts (as has been surmised regarding Anthony Wilhelm). (2) Content vs. method: The relationship of these two is a major concern. "It can certainly be observed that in the last twenty years method has overshadowed content. Of course, this is not restricted to religious instruction . . ." (p. 148). Citing Aristotle, he observed that content dictates method, and in no area is this truer than in religious instruction. (3) Faith and theology: "The

<sup>52</sup>Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Response to the French bishops' conference, July 7, 1983: AAS 76 (1984) 52. The congregation cites as sources for the general norms on catechetical materials canons 823, §1; 830, §2; *General Catechetical Directory*, n. 119; preamble, §6.

<sup>53</sup>Letter of Archbishop Gerety, pp. 621-22. there are six items listed which the advisers in Newark considered problematic, but the letter indicates the congregation had "even more serious problems" which are not enumerated in detail.

<sup>54</sup>Because of these and other similar examples, the French scholar René Marlé summarizes the differences, saying the first edition of *Pierres Vivantes* took "a historical-phenomenological approach, whereas the revised edition incorporates a resolutely dogmatic-ontological point of view." René Marlé, "Le réfonte de *Pierres Vivantes*," p. 539.

<sup>55</sup>"Sources and Transmission of the Faith," *Communio* 10 (Spring 1983) 17-34.

<sup>56</sup>See *Communio* 11 (Summer 1984) 145-56.

binding power of the Magisterium is accepted less and less. This means that the borders between theology and faith are slowly fading, that church teaching disappears and theological teaching remains the sole form of interpreting the Christian gospel" (p. 150). His concern here is that theologians seem to be taking the place of the Magisterium. Moreover, he raises an underlying question of ecclesiology: he understands the church as the community of faith which accepts certain givens (e.g., "the Bible as lived and read in the Church") as points of departure, which is quite a different approach from what he terms a "purely congregational ecclesiology" which he says is based on consensus (or worse, "the whim of the group"). (4) Story of Creation: Cardinal Ratzinger has long been concerned about the way creation is presented in catechetical materials. "The tendency no longer to open the Old Testament in catechesis with creation," he says, "has manifold and extremely significant bases" (p. 151).<sup>57</sup>

### III. APPROVAL OF CATECHISMS AND CATECHETICAL MATERIALS FOR OFFICIAL USE

In addition to being approved prior to publication, catechisms and catechetical materials can also be adopted for official use. The new Code of Canon Law is not entirely precise in this area; the responses from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in 1983 do add some further details. For the sake of clarity this topic will be considered under headings similar to those adopted above: the notion of "approval"; the authority competent to approve various types of materials; the process for obtaining approval; and the criteria for determining to approve catechisms and catechetical materials.

#### *A. Notion of Approval*

Once approval has been given for publication, it is presumed the material can be used anywhere unless otherwise restricted. Such restrictions may be due to local requirements of certain materials for specific places or uses; they may also be due to the prohibition of certain materials from use in specific places or for specific purposes.

Canon 775 states:

§1. While observing the prescriptions of the Apostolic See it is the responsibility of the diocesan bishop to issue norms concerning catechetics and to make provision that suitable instruments for catechesis are available, even by preparing a catechism, if such seems appropriate, and by fostering and coordinating catechetical endeavors.

§2. It is within the competence of the conference of bishops, with the prior approval of the Apostolic See, to see to it that catechisms are issued for its territory if such seems useful.

Contained in both these provisions are the possibility of "approval for use."

1. A distinction may be made between those materials used by parents on their own and materials used in programs conducted or at least authorized by the dio-

<sup>57</sup>See discussion above on the complaints the congregation had about *Pierres Vivantes*.

cese. Parents have the primary right and responsibility to educate their children,<sup>58</sup> and as Christians and Catholics, to educate them in the faith.<sup>59</sup> They are to do this "according to the teaching handed on by the Church" (c. 226, §2), presumably using materials which the Church has approved for this purpose.

But the diocesan bishop also has a responsibility in this regard, and he may issue norms which govern catechesis in his diocese (cc. 386, §1; 775, §1). He may specify what materials are acceptable for parents to use.

The law does not say if the bishop can limit the materials parents may use, requiring them to use only those which have received special approval for use in the diocese. The July 1983 response from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith does permit the use of texts published with ecclesiastical approval which have not been adopted as the official materials of the diocese, but as subsidiary means.<sup>60</sup>

Neither the law nor the congregation's response address a third question, namely whether the bishop can proscribe the use of such books by parents in his diocese. In light of the rights of parents and in light of the criteria for approving catechisms and catechetical materials for publication, it would seem that parents retain the right to make the final determination of what materials to use for their own catechizing of their children, provided those materials were published with proper approbation.

For programs conducted by church authorities or with their authorization, the diocesan bishop may adopt required catechisms and materials, but is not required to do so by law.<sup>61</sup> The bishop has these options:

- a. He could issue a listing which is advisory; other materials may be used provided they were published with proper approval.
- b. He could issue a listing with a variety of materials, and require as a norm that only those on the list be selected; but he could permit those responsible for the individual programs to make a choice from among those on the list.
- c. He could adopt a mandatory catechism and catechetical materials which must be used in all such programs in the diocese.

Other materials not on the list but published with ecclesiastical approval could be used as auxiliary means, in keeping with the response from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith.<sup>62</sup>

In any of these situations, could the diocesan bishop proscribe the use of other materials not on the list, but published with approbation? Although the law does

<sup>58</sup>Cc. 226, §2; 793, §1.

<sup>59</sup>Cc. 226, §2; 774, §2; 793, §1; 798.

<sup>60</sup>Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Response to Cardinal Oddi, V, July 7, 1983: AAS 76 (1984) 49.

<sup>61</sup>The canon states "make provision that suitable instruments for catechesis are available." This does not mean he must mandate specific ones, provided he sees that suitable instruments are available.

<sup>62</sup>Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Response to Cardinal Oddi, V, July 7, 1983: AAS 76 (1984) 49.



not have a specific canon on this, and the congregation's response did not address the question directly, nevertheless the Church has discontinued the banning of books. The most the bishop could do is proscribe the use of certain materials in programs conducted by church authorities or with their authorization.

### B. The Competent Authority

1. The conference of bishops is competent to see that catechisms are issued for its territory (c. 775, §2). The code is not specific on whether this is only to prepare and publish such a book, or also to mandate its use. The responses from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, however, indicate several arguments in support of a possible mandate of a national catechism.

First, the adoption of a national catechism by the conference of bishops is considered by the congregation to be an example of the exercise of legislative power by the conference.<sup>63</sup> If it is legislative power, then the conference could mandate as part of that legislation that this particular catechism be used throughout its territory. A local ordinary (diocesan bishop, vicar general, episcopal vicar) could, however, dispense from this requirement in a particular diocese when he judges this will contribute to the good of the faithful (c. 88).

Second, the congregation presumes that such a national catechism could be mandatory. It notes that for catechesis conducted under the authority of the pastor in parishes and schools, catechisms "approved and adopted as official texts by the bishop himself or by the conference of bishops" must be used.<sup>64</sup>

Therefore, a national catechism may be approved but not mandatory; or, in the wording of the response, it may have been "approved and adopted," in which case it becomes mandatory.

2. The diocesan bishop is also competent to adopt an official catechism for his diocese. Note that this is the diocesan bishop, not the "local ordinary," so vicars general and episcopal vicars are not included here, unless they have been specially delegated by the diocesan bishop. The diocesan bishop may adopt materials prepared by others, or may himself see to the preparation of a catechism (c. 775, §1). Even if the conference of bishops has adopted an official national catechism, the diocesan bishop may still approve other catechisms and materials.<sup>65</sup>

The documents do not present a ready solution to the potential conflict which could arise if a conference of bishops approves a national catechism and mandates its use in the territory, yet one or another diocesan bishop approves and adopts as mandatory in the diocese a different catechism. The general principles of law side with the individual bishop. He can dispense from the particular law of the conference of bishops, and is empowered to make norms for his own diocese on catechetical matters. However, such a situation would be contrary to the underlying purpose of the law and of the *General Catechetical Directory* which is looking to foster cooperation on a wider scale.<sup>66</sup>

<sup>63</sup>*Ibid.*, IV; p. 49.

<sup>64</sup>*Ibid.*, V; p. 49.

<sup>65</sup>*Ibid.*, III; p. 48.

<sup>66</sup>*General Catechetical Directory*, n. 117: AAS 64 (1972) 165.

### C. Process for Obtaining Approval

Canon law does not specify a procedure to be followed in approving catechisms and catechetical materials for use in a diocese or larger territory. However, whatever procedure is adopted should at least protect the basic rights of parents, pastors, catechists, authors, publishers, and others with an interest in the matter. Special consideration might also be due potential civil law and ethical questions.<sup>67</sup>

### D. Criteria

The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith recalls that when approving catechisms destined for official use in the diocese, the bishop is to consider not only the usual questions of orthodox content and conformity to the universal norms of catechetics, but also the particular norms he himself may have issued in light of the needs of his own diocese, and those norms adopted by the conference of bishops and approved by the Holy See.<sup>68</sup>

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

This report has attempted to set forth a clarification on various materials relating to catechetics, and on the approval for such materials. The following comments are occasioned by this study.

There have been significant developments in the approach official documents have taken to catechetical materials over the past twenty-five years. The emphasis in the conciliar discussion and in the *General Catechetical Directory* which drew on that discussion has moved from a child-centered catechesis and preoccupation with catechisms, to a more integrated approach to the catechesis of the whole community involving formation in doctrine and the experience of Christian living.

1. The norms for the evaluation of catechetical materials include considerations of doctrinal integrity, adaptability to the intended audience, and involvement in the experience of Christian living.

2. The publication of many catechetical materials requires only the approval of a local ordinary. The diocesan bishop, however, is the one competent to approve materials for use within his own diocese.

Only those materials developed under the auspices of the conference of bishops and intended for all the territory of the conference require approval by the Apostolic See before they are published or adopted for mandatory use.

3. There are evident differences of opinion among competent church authorities as to what is required in catechetical materials. The remarks of Cardinal Ratzinger and the actions of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith express a

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<sup>67</sup>For example, conflict of interest if the author, publisher or other person with a financial interest in the book has a role in its selection as the mandated text for the diocese.

<sup>68</sup>Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Response to French bishops' conference, July 7, 1983: AAS 76 (1984) 52.

particular emphasis; the directives in the *General Catechetical Directory* and *Sharing the Life of Faith* reflect other emphases.

As the 1985 Synod of Bishops noted, "the presentation of doctrine must be biblical and liturgical. It must be sound doctrine, suited to the present life of Christians."<sup>69</sup> How to achieve that suitable presentation depends on the conditions of life of peoples in various parts of the world, and so admits of differences in emphases. The Synod called for a catechism or compendium of all Catholic doctrine to be developed, but presented this as a point of reference for efforts at a regional or more local level.

4. As was evident at the 1969 Extraordinary Synod and again at the 1985 Extraordinary Synod, there is need for closer cooperation between officials of the Roman Curia and bishops in many areas, not the least of which is catechesis. To the extent that such cooperation is still to be developed, the approval of catechisms may remain a point of tension.

Local ordinaries by law have the right and responsibility to pass judgment on catechetical materials and to approve those they find meet the basic criteria set down in the normative documents of the Church. Local ordinaries are also accountable to higher authorities for such decisions. However, while there are clear procedures and criteria to which the local ordinaries are bound in granting approval, the procedures and criteria by which they themselves are held accountable by higher authority do not seem to be equally clear.

5. Official church documents refer to a variety of materials for catechetical use; they also encourage the development of programs for catechesis. Not all of these materials are official catechisms, nor do church authorities act alone in the catechetical enterprise. The law of the Church affirms the obligation and right of all the Christian faithful to engage in spreading the divine message of salvation (c. 211), and emphasizes the role of parents in passing on the faith to their children.<sup>70</sup> While the materials used in catechesis require approval of competent church authorities, members of the faithful may develop them. This diversity in the development and use of such materials also needs to be taken into consideration in the process of granting approval.

Addendum to Appendix A  
SIGNIFICANT DEVELOPMENTS IN CATECHETICS  
A CHRONOLOGY 1965-1985

The following brief chronology of significant developments in catechetics is provided as background for the report, "The Approval of Catechisms and Catechetical Materials." It is not intended as a comprehensive review of all events relating to catechisms and catechetical materials, but rather as a means of providing a context for the contemporary situation.

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<sup>69</sup>1985 Extraordinary Synod of Bishops, *The Final Report*, II, B, 1, d (Washington: USCC Publications, 1986) 16.

<sup>70</sup>See cc. 226, §2; 774, §2; 776; 793; 798.

1965—*De Nieuwe Katechismus*,<sup>71</sup> "The Dutch Catechism," was published. Commissioned by the Dutch bishops in 1962 on the eve of Vatican II, it was intended primarily for adults. The Dutch Catechism was greeted with phenomenal sales, praise from Pope Paul VI, and translated in a half-dozen or more languages. The very positive reception began to turn sour when a group of Dutch traditionalists protested to Rome "the seven deadly sins" of the catechism. Controversy erupted when their letter was leaked to the press.<sup>72</sup>

Because of the popularity of the translations hierarchies from other countries were drawn into the controversy. As a result an international commission of cardinals, assisted by a panel of theologians, was appointed to pronounce on the trustworthiness of the Dutch catechism. The commission issued a statement suggesting some clarifications. They were included as an appendix in later editions.<sup>73</sup>

1968—Sixth International Study Week on Catechetics met in August at Medellin, Colombia.<sup>74</sup> Its affirmation that pluralism in the Church is a "sign of life and energy" was important in shaping Part I of the *General Catechetical Directory*.

1968—Hubertus Halbfas published *Fundamentalkatechetik*, a comprehensive catechetical theory.<sup>75</sup> Halbfas questioned not only the manner of presenting doctrine, but the linguistic and organizational structure of German Catholic education. He charged that it was a self-validating mode and self-perpetuating form of social control condemning a great number of Catholics to a partial though lifelong adolescence. Piety is no substitute for competence. Halbfas criticized the language in the pastorals of the German bishops and papal encyclicals for being ineffective and uninspiring.

Even before the book appeared Halbfas was under fire for demythologizing the Scriptures in a January 1968 issue of *Katechetische Blätter*. In July 1968 the German bishops' conference issued a declaration condemning certain statements in *Fundamentalkatechetik* as inconsistent with Catholic teaching. When Halbfas refused to retract or suitably explain his position regarding the Virgin Birth, the German bishops acting in full assembly withdrew his license to teach. He lost his

<sup>71</sup>*De Nieuwe Katechismus* (Antwerp: P. Brand, 1966); English translation, *A New Catechism: Catholic Faith for Adults* (New York: Herder & Herder, 1969).

<sup>72</sup>An English translation of the letter appeared in *Herder Correspondence*, March 1967, p. 94.

<sup>73</sup>Aldo Chiaruttini, ed., *Il dossier del Catechismo olandese* (Verona: Arnoldo Mondadori, 1968). Michael Donnellan says the significance of the reaction to the Dutch catechism was that for the first time since Vatican II the "conservative movement became an organized lobby opposed to catechetical reform." See "The German and Dutch Catechisms in Retrospect," *The Living Light* 12 (1975) 28.

<sup>74</sup>Johannes Hofinger and Terrence J. Sheridan, eds., *Sixth International Study Week on Catechetics* (Manila: East Asian Pastoral Institute, 1969).

<sup>75</sup>Hubertus Halbfas, *Fundamentalkatechetik: Sprache und Erfahrung im Religionsunterricht* (Düsseldorf: Patmos, 1968; rev. 2d ed., 1969); English translation *Theory of Catechetics: Language and Experience in Religious Education* (New York: Herder & Herder, 1971).

faculty position as professor of Catholic theology and religious education at Reutlingen College of Education.<sup>76</sup>

1969—The Isolotto catechism appeared.<sup>77</sup> “On the Way to Jesus” is a series of short instructions to working-class catechists on how to make the gospel meaningful and relevant in the life of children. It was the result of years of experimenting in the working-class parish of l’Isolotto, a suburb of Florence.

The archbishop of Florence, Cardinal Florit, banned the use of the “catechism,” stating that it presented Christ merely as a social agitator and interpreted salvation merely in the sociological sense as a liberation from oppression and exploitation. The notoriety sent sales of the text soaring, but the issue of the “catechism” was sidetracked by another episode in which people of l’Isolotto and their pastor, Don Enzo Mazzi, lent support to a group of social activists in Parma at odds with the bishop there. It was this latter incident more than the catechetical work which led to the dismissal of the pastor.<sup>78</sup>

1971—Congregation for the Clergy published the *Directorium Catechisticum Generale*<sup>79</sup> mandated by Vatican II (*Christus Dominus* 44). An authorized English translation was published by the USCC later in the year.<sup>80</sup> For the first time, prior Roman approval (and not just “review”) was required for a catechism developed by a national hierarchy.

The *General Catechetical Directory* was accepted on the part of professional religious educators, but a controversy arose over the *Addendum*: “The First Reception of the Sacraments of Penance and Eucharist.” This last section, a late insertion, had not been considered in the consultation process which produced the directory.

1971—Congregation for the Clergy, then headed by Cardinal Wright, hosted an international catechetical congress in Rome. The principal focus of discussion was the *General Catechetical Directory*.

1971—The last national meeting of the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine was held, in October at Miami. National meetings had been held every five years.

1971—The USCC-NCCB called at their November meeting for a feasibility study and a plan for producing a national catechetical directory for the United States. The plan was approved at the 1972 Spring meeting in Atlanta.

1972—Congregation for Divine Worship approved the revised Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA).<sup>81</sup> Following the mandate of Vatican II (*SC* 64-66; *AG* 14; *CD* 14) the RCIA restored the catechumenate and emphasized the paschal character of the catechesis which prepares catechumens for baptism.

<sup>76</sup>“Freedom for Halbfas,” *Herder Correspondence*, February 1969, pp. 55-59.

<sup>77</sup>*Incontro a Gesù* (Florence: Libreria Editrice Fiorentina, 1969).

<sup>78</sup>“The Isolotto Affair,” *Herder Correspondence*, February 1969, pp. 59-62.

<sup>79</sup>Congregation for the Clergy, *Directorium catechisticum generale*, April 11, 1971: AAS 64 (1972) 97-176.

<sup>80</sup>*General Catechetical Directory* (Washington: USCC, 1971).

<sup>81</sup>Congregation for Divine Worship, Decretum, January 6, 1972; AAS 64 (1972) 252.

1972—*To Teach as Jesus Did*, A Pastoral Message on Catholic Education, was adopted at the November bishops' meeting. Issued by the USCC, the document presents the educational mission of the Church as "an integrated ministry embracing three interlocking dimensions: the message revealed by God (*didache*) which the Church proclaims; fellowship in the life of the Holy Spirit (*koinonia*); service to the Christian community and the entire human community (*diakonia*)."<sup>82</sup>

1973—*Basic Teachings for Catholic Religious Education*<sup>83</sup> was published in January by the NCCB after consultation with the Apostolic See. It generally followed Part Three, chapter two of the *General Catechetical Directory*, "The More Outstanding Elements of the Christian Message." *Basic Teachings*, however, was original in that it singled out three themes "which carry through all religious education," namely prayer, participation in the liturgy, and bible study.

1975—Pope Paul VI issued his apostolic exhortation *Evangelii nuntiandi*<sup>84</sup> incorporating many points made at the 1974 Synod of Bishops. It speaks of catechesis as a means of evangelization, stressing the importance of "suitable (catechetical) texts, updated with wisdom and competence, under the authority of the bishops."<sup>85</sup>

1976—NCCB adopts *To Live in Christ Jesus*, a Pastoral Reflection on the Moral Life.<sup>86</sup> In this pastoral letter the U.S. bishops "discuss some moral questions of our day which affect the dignity of human persons." Sections of the document were later incorporated into the national catechetical directory.

1977—Synod of Bishops met during October in Rome on the theme "Catechetics in Our Time." The *lineamenta* circulated in preparation for the synod focused on "youth" (up to 35 years old!), but the discussion dealt with catechesis in general as well as with particular problems stemming from culture, social status, educational background, and age differences.

1979—*Sharing the Light of Faith* published.<sup>87</sup> After a consultation process of almost five years which produced three drafts, the NCCB had approved the text of this national catechetical directory at their November 14-17, 1977 meeting. It had received approval of the Congregation for the Clergy on October 30, 1978.

1979—Pope John Paul II issued an apostolic exhortation on catechetics, *Catechesi tradendae*.<sup>88</sup> Pope John Paul II had attended the synod as Cardinal Wojtyla. A first draft of the apostolic exhortation had been prepared by Pope Paul VI but it

<sup>82</sup>USCC, *To Teach as Jesus Did* (Washington: USCC, 1973), n. 14.

<sup>83</sup>NCCB, *Basic Teachings for Catholic Religious Education* (Washington: USCC, 1973).

<sup>84</sup>Paul VI, apostolic exhortation *Evangelii nuntiandi*, December 8, 1975: AAS 68 (1976) 5-76.

<sup>85</sup>*Ibid.*, n. 44; pp. 34-35.

<sup>86</sup>NCCB, *To Live in Christ Jesus* (Washington: USCC, 1976).

<sup>87</sup>NCCB, *Sharing the Light of Faith*, National Catechetical Directory for Catholics of the United States (Washington: USCC, 1979).

<sup>88</sup>John Paul II, apostolic exhortation *Catechesi tradendae*, October 16, 1979: AAS 71 (1979) 1277-1340.

was left to Pope John Paul II to complete the document. It is important to note that in two places the document reiterates that the *General Catechetical Directory* remains normative for catechetical renewal.<sup>89</sup>

1981—*Pierres Vivantes*, “a Catholic collection of privileged documents of the faith,” was published under the direction of the French bishops’ conference as part of a larger catechetical project.<sup>90</sup> This short work of 126 pages took its direction from the “Message to the People of God” issued by the bishops at the end of the 1977 synod on catechesis. The principle documents which transmit the faith are the Scriptures and the Creeds, but also the living witness of the Church through its history, liturgy, and saints. Marginal notes explained technical terms and gave the meaning of traditional formulas.

The first edition of *Pierres Vivantes* presented a novel approach to catechesis and was widely acclaimed by catechists. Because it was an official publication of the French hierarchy the work was reviewed by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. The congregation directed that a number of changes be made and a revised edition was published in 1985.<sup>91</sup>

1983—During the discussions between the French bishops and the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, the prefect of the congregation, Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, was invited to address catechetical gatherings in Lyons and Paris. His views were widely reported.<sup>92</sup>

1983—Two responses were issued by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith on the interpretation of the decree *Ecclesiae Pastorum* (concerning prior censorship of books) as it applies to catechetical matters, both dated July 7, 1983.

Responding to Cardinal Oddi of the Congregation for the Clergy,<sup>93</sup> the congregation addressed five questions, with the following results: a national or regional conference of bishops cannot publish national or regional catechisms or catechetical documents, to be in force on the supra-diocesan level, without prior approval of the Holy See; conferences of bishops also cannot propose and disseminate catechisms at the national level for “consultation and experimentation”; even if he has already approved a national catechism, a local ordinary can give an *imprimatur* to particular catechisms when these have a safe content and clear presentation; a bishops’ commission cannot be given the permanent authority to approve or reject catechisms at the national level or for individual dioceses; in addition to an official catechism, other catechisms which have been duly approved by ecclesiastical authority may be used, but as “subsidiary means.”

<sup>89</sup>*Catechesi tradendae*, nn. 2 and 50; AAS 71 (1979) 1278, 1317-18.

<sup>90</sup>*Pierres Vivantes*, Recueil catholique de documents privilégiés de la foi. Les évêques de France aux enfants du Cours Moyen, leurs catéchistes et leurs parents (Paris: “Catéchèse 80,” 1981).

<sup>91</sup>See René Marlé, “La réfonte de *Pierres Vivantes*,” *Etudes* 363:5 (November 1985) 533-40.

<sup>92</sup>English translation: “Sources and Transmission of the Faith,” *Communio* 10:1 (Spring 1983) 17-34.

<sup>93</sup>Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Responses, July 7, 1983; AAS 76 (1984) 45-49.

The congregation also provided a lengthy response to an inquiry from the French conference of bishops.<sup>94</sup> Their question was whether the decree *Ecclesiae pastorum*, art. 4, §1, implied the local ordinary had to take into consideration that a book is destined for catechetical use when he is asked to give his prior approval for its publication. The congregation answered in the affirmative, and then made the following distinction.<sup>95</sup> If the approval is only for publication, and not as an official diocesan catechism, then the local ordinary is to consider the general norms relative to orthodoxy of content and the universal ecclesiastical norms concerning catechetics (cc. 823, §1; 830, §2; *General Catechetical Directory*, n. 119; preamble §6). If, on the other hand, approval is for catechisms destined for official catechesis in the diocese, besides considering the orthodoxy of their content and the universal ecclesiastical norms concerning catechesis, the ordinary must also take into consideration the particular norms issued for the diocese (c. 775, §1) and the norms established by the conference of bishops and approved by the Holy See (*General Catechetical Directory*, n. 134).

1984—In February, Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, asked Archbishop Gerety of Newark to remove the designations *nihil obstat* and *imprimatur* from *Christ Among us* by Anthony Wilhelm.<sup>96</sup> Cardinal Ratzinger's letter stated that even with "substantial corrections" the book "would not be suitable as a catechetical text."<sup>97</sup>

1985—In August the German bishops published *Katholischer Erwachsenen-Katechismus*,<sup>98</sup> a compendium of Catholic doctrine for use by catechists. In 1976 the German bishops' conference commissioned a new catechism, but nothing was done until 1981 when Cardinal Ratzinger, then chairman of the conference's Commission for the Faith, assigned the task to theologian Walter Kasper. Kasper acknowledges that while the new German catechism is a compendium of doctrine in the tradition of the Catechism of the Council of Trent, it has more immediate precedents in the Dutch catechism, the Common Catechism, and the new Lutheran Catechism for Adults.<sup>99</sup>

1985—At the Extraordinary Synod of Bishops in December the proposal for a universal catechism was discussed. In the final report the Synod stated: "Very many have expressed the desire that a catechism or compendium of all Catholic doctrine regarding both faith and morals be composed, that it might be, as it were, a point of reference for the catechisms or compendiums that are prepared in the various regions. The presentation of doctrine must be biblical and liturgical. It must be sound doctrine, suited to the present life of Christians."<sup>100</sup>

<sup>94</sup>*Ibid.*, 49-52.

<sup>95</sup>*Ibid.*, 52.

<sup>96</sup>Anthony Wilhelm, *Christ Among Us* (New York: Paulist Press, 3rd rev. ed. 1981).

<sup>97</sup>Archbishop Gerety, "Archbishop Explains Imprimatur Removal," *Origins* 14:28 (March 7, 1985) 621.

<sup>98</sup>*Katholischer Erwachsenen-katechismus* (Kevelaer: Butzon and Bercker, 1985).

<sup>99</sup>Walter Kasper, "The Church's Profession of Faith: On Drafting a New Catholic Catechism for Adults," *Communio* 11 (1984) 41-70.

<sup>100</sup>Extraordinary Synod of Bishops, *The Final Report*, December 8, 1985: II, B, 1, d); English translation (Washington: USCC, 1985), p. 16.