

# **SECONDARY LEVEL (SL) PROTOCOL**

**FOR ASSESSING THE CONFORMITY  
OF SECONDARY LEVEL  
CATECHETICAL MATERIALS  
WITH THE  
*CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH***

**Subcommittee to Oversee the Use of the Catechism**

**United States Conference of Catholic Bishops**

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## INTRODUCTION

In the Apostolic Constitution *Fidei depositum*, Pope John Paul II states that the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* “is meant to encourage and assist in the writing of new local catechisms, which take into account various situations and cultures, while carefully preserving the unity of faith and fidelity to Catholic doctrine” (no. 3).

In light of this objective, and at the charge of the Administrative Committee of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, the USCCB Subcommittee on the Catechism is responsible for reviewing catechetical materials voluntarily submitted by publishers in order to ensure the conformity of these materials with the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.

A further development arose in 2007 with the unanimous approval by the U.S. Bishops of *Doctrinal Elements of A Curriculum Framework for the Development of Catechetical Materials for Young People of High School Age*. Subsequent to the publication of this document, the Committee on Evangelization and Catechesis directed the Subcommittee on the Catechism to use it as the principal instrument for the review of secondary level catechetical texts to determine their conformity with the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.

In order to implement this charge, the Subcommittee on the Catechism has developed the *Secondary Level (SL) Protocol* along the following lines:

- As far as possible, the language of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* is employed as the evaluative point of reference for conformity.
- *Doctrinal Elements of A Curriculum Framework for the Development of Catechetical Materials for Young People of High School Age* is employed to indicate the distribution of the *Catechism*'s teaching over four years of secondary instruction.
- The SL review process is primarily intended for complete series of catechetical materials which encompass Grades 9 – 12, or alternately, a catechumenate program for this age group. However, the review process can be adapted for portions of a complete catechetical series. Supplementary texts will be assessed for conformity using the standard *Protocol* which predates the *SL Protocol*.
- Conformity reviews are focused on the content of catechetical materials and, like the *Catechism* itself, are not directly concerned with catechetical methods.

# SECONDARY LEVEL (SL) PROTOCOL

## FOR ASSESSING THE CONFORMITY OF SECONDARY LEVEL CATECHETICAL MATERIALS WITH THE *CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH*

### PART ONE

#### PRINCIPLES OF CRITERIA TO ENSURE CONFORMITY WITH THE BASIC THEOLOGICAL STRUCTURE OF THE CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

##### AUTHENTICITY

According to our *Guidelines for Doctrinally Sound Catechetical Materials*, the first principle for assessing the conformity of catechetical materials to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* is “that the Christian message be authentic. For expressions of faith and moral teachings to be authentic, they must be in harmony with the doctrine and traditions of the Catholic Church, which are safeguarded by the bishops who teach with a unique authority” (*Guidelines for Doctrinally Sound Catechetical Materials*, United States Catholic Conference, p.7).

In order for catechetical materials developed from the *Catechism* to be authentic, the following criteria should be observed:

- Minimally, the catechetical materials should contain nothing contradictory to the *Catechism*
- They should encourage and assist in the development of a common language of faith within the Church
- They should 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 *Catechism* should not be reduced to its *in brief* sections, catechetical materials should evidence the wider context of teaching from which the *in brief* sections are drawn

In order for catechetical materials developed from the *Catechism* to be authentic, the theological structure as indicated below should be at least implicit in the catechetical materials:

- **Trinitarian organization**  
The *Catechism* does not simply treat of 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

*Catechism's* treatment of worship and liturgy, the life of grace underpinning the moral life and the life of prayer.

- **Christological centrality**

The *Catechism* breathes the person, life and mission of Jesus Christ. The entire *Catechism* is a breaking open of the mystery of the Word made flesh. Christ is presented as fully God and fully man.

- **Ecclesial context**

The *Catechism'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 *Catechism* 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 *Catechism* 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 *Catechism* makes clear that the moral life is not merely human endeavor nor is it simply a series of dos and don'ts. It is rooted in a real new 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 5<sup>th</sup> 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 distinctiveness and the relationship of the various life issues to one another.

- **The Church's teachings on human sexuality related to the section on the 6<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> Commandments**

The *Catechism* treats human sexuality within the context of education in sexual morality. This arrangement now supersedes the development of separate segments on education in human sexuality apart from the moral teaching.

- **The Church's teaching on social justice related to the section on the 7<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> Commandments**

The *Catechism* offers a succinct presentation of the Church's teaching on social justice both in the introduction to the Commandments and in the treatment of the 7<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> Commandments. This presentation also preserves the relationship between teaching and social justice with the rest of the moral teaching of the Church.

## COMPLETENESS

The second principle for assessing the conformity of catechetical materials to the *Catechism* is “that the Christian message be complete” (*Guidelines*, p.7).

In order for catechetical materials developed from the *Catechism* to be considered complete, the doctrines of the Church should be presented as an integrated whole and there should be an intrinsic cohesiveness to the presentation of the faith:

- The materials should reflect the four pillars of the *Catechism*: such materials should include the articles of the Creed, the Sacraments, the Commandments and the petitions of the Lord’s Prayer, as distributed in the *Doctrinal Elements of A Curriculum Framework for the Development of Catechetical Materials for Young People of High School Age*.
- They should also include an appropriate presentation of the rootedness of the teaching in Sacred Scripture.
- They should reflect in an appropriate manner the variety and multiplicity of the sources of the faith found in the *Catechism*, for example, the teachings from the Councils, the Eastern and Western Fathers, liturgical texts and spiritual writings.
- They should show that God’s love is revealed primarily in the Word made flesh, Jesus Christ.
- They should give proper importance to the biblical, anthropological, liturgical, moral and spiritual, as well as to the ecumenical and missionary dimensions of the *Catechism*.

These principles and criteria are the most fundamental ways in which catechetical materials should reflect the teachings of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* as distributed in the *Doctrinal Elements of A Curriculum Framework for the Development of Catechetical Materials for Young People of High School Age*.

They touch the underlying theological teaching and give spirit to the specific content which Part Two fleshes out in a more concrete way.

## PART TWO

### EVALUATIVE POINTS OR REFERENCE FOR AUTHENTICITY AND COMPLETENESS

The points of reference are intended to guide both reviewers and publishers in assessing the conformity of the catechetical materials to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. On the pages that follow, the first column, marked *Evaluative Points of Reference for Authenticity and Completeness*, contains the doctrine which should be treated in the materials. The number in parenthesis at the end of each point of reference is the paragraph from the *Catechism* that is the source of that particular point of reference. The following instructions should assist you in completing the review.

### REVIEWER INSTRUCTIONS

- The *Secondary Level Protocol* is the standard instrument of review for secondary level catechetical materials. It should be used in tandem with the publisher's own assessment of the materials, which is also based on the *Secondary Level Protocol*.
- When an item of the *Secondary Level Protocol* is covered adequately, a "Yes" in the second column, marked *Conformity*, will suffice.
- When an item is not covered or is only partially covered, please write either "No" or "Partial" in the *Conformity* column. In addition, please note in the third column, marked *Required Changes, Recommendations, Suggestions*, where in the material you believe the publisher could efficiently address the deficiency.
- You can also note in the third column any recommendations or suggestions you believe would strengthen the presentation of the doctrine.

### PUBLISHER INSTRUCTIONS

- Even though the third column is titled *Required Changes, Recommendations, Suggestions*, you should use this column to cite the text and/or page reference where the specific *Secondary Level Protocol* item is treated in your materials.
- If possible, mark the actual text and/or page of the materials where the specific *Secondary Level Protocol* items are correlated.