



Seton Home Study School

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◆ *“Under the Magisterium of the Catholic Church”* ◆

November 1997

Feast of All Saints

We spiritually start the month of November by remembering and honoring all the saints in heaven in the Solemnity of All Saints on November 1. We especially remember those who are saints in heaven but who have not been canonized by the Church.

We then remember all the souls in purgatory in the Commemoration of the Faithful Departed on November 2. The Church encourages us to earn graces for the souls in purgatory by both participating at Mass and receiving Holy Communion twice on that day. The Church also encourages us to earn a plenary indulgence on that day for the souls in purgatory. Of course, we can earn a plenary indulgence for the departed on any other day as well.

The Feasts of All Saints and All Souls Day remind us that the Church is a Communion of Saints, an “intimate association of holy ones,” that crosses the boundaries of time and eternity. The Church, the Mystical Body of Christ, includes three kinds of holy ones: the Church “Triumphant,” those who have reached everlasting holiness in happiness in heaven; the Church “Suffering,” those who are holy but still are being purified through temporal punishment due to their sins in purgatory; and the Church “Militant,” those who are still struggling to be holy on earth.

We home schooling parents and children are members of the Church Militant. We have to be “militant” because we are actively engaged in a terrible war against sin and the devil. We do

not have the option of being neutral or complacent. If we do not fight the battles, we will lose them and our souls.

Fortunately, we in the Church Militant have the privilege and benefits of being members of the Communion of Saints. We can call upon the saints of heaven and the souls of purgatory to intercede for us in our struggles.

We also can and should pray for the souls in purgatory. Our charity toward them exercises the spiritual “muscles” of generosity and charity that we should also exercise toward our brothers and sisters who are currently with us in the Church Militant. Our readiness for spiritual combat is also needed for us to evangelize others who are only potential members of the Church Militant. The more the “army of charity” of the Church on earth can liberate others from the bondage of the Enemy, the more the “army of charity” will increase and become an even more important force for good.

We need to cultivate a continual awareness of the prayers and solicitude of the other two parts of the Communion of Saints on our behalf. When we do, we will be less likely to feel alone and discouraged in our spiritual battles. We can take special comfort in the prayers of the Church Triumphant and the Church Suffering when we realize that they both have gone before us in the struggle for holiness, the “Holy War” in the proper sense. They truly “know” what we go through.

We can also take comfort that the more holy members of the Church Militant are praying for the rest of us warriors. The Church has all the spiritual power of the “special forces” of the religious orders, especially the contemplative orders, helping the Church Militant as a whole.

One of the most difficult parts of the spiritual battle is being confronted with the opposition of others within the “forces” of the Church Militant. Unfortunately, some Catholics do not understand the crucial need for home schooling. When such opposition arises, we have to call especially upon the greatest weapon of the Holy Spirit, His spouse, the Blessed Virgin Mary. We have to ask her to give us the grace of discernment and charity when we face the opposition of good Catholic people who do not understand what is at stake.

O Blessed Mother! Help us to be good and faithful warriors of the Church Militant. Lady of Victory, help us to understand the will of our Commander, our Lord Jesus Christ. Grant us shrewdness, courage, and chivalry in our battles leading to the salvation of our family and the glory of your Son’s most Holy Name.

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Questions We Are Asked

by Dr. Mary Kay Clark
Director,
Seton Home Study School

There have been questions recently in on-line discussion groups about copying materials from publishers. Some parents have several children and cannot afford to purchase multiple copies. What is Seton's opinion about this?

Someone sent us some of the e-mail on the "copyright controversy," and we are in agreement with the mother who wrote that "the producers of the home education materials need to maintain economic viability if they are to continue to function, improve, and expand. When we copy material instead of purchasing them, we are depriving them of badly-needed financial resources. ... Unless the producers of our materials thrive economically, we will all be without materials one day."

Seton is steadily moving ahead to produce more Catholic materials with higher quality content, as well as using more graphics and color. It is tremendously expensive for a small publisher like Seton. However, as we expand and improve our products we are able to sell more books which actually brings down the cost per book. If we could get to the point where we print 5 or 10 thousand copies of each title, we would be able to lower our prices quite a bit. But this can only happen if the families who use our books actually buy our books.

My parish DRE has told me that my children must go to the CCD classes, and the "RCIA-Y" program. She also said the bishop wants me to "throw away" my New St. Joseph catechism for children because it is "no longer valid." Has the Imprimatur on the

St. Joseph Baltimore Catechism been revoked? Do you know what materials are considered "valid" by the bishops?

Seton is receiving phone calls, letters, faxes, and e-mails from parents all across the country who are telling us that their parish DRE is insisting that their children attend the parish CCD programs or use the materials "approved" in their diocese, or they will not be eligible to receive the sacraments.

Back in the 1960's and 1970's when many of these "sacramental guidelines" were written, no one had heard about home schooling. Children were either registered in the parish school or attended the public school. It seemed appropriate that children in the public schools attend the parish CCD programs, though parents had the right and responsibility to do the religious education at home if they so chose. Now we have a third category of home schooled children being taught five or more days a week with their own in-home religion program. Most dioceses have not updated their guidelines, so the local DRE's continue to apply the old guidelines for the new situation.

In addition, the national organization of religious education teachers encourages the teachers to push the home schooling children into these programs, not even mentioning the church teachings on the primary and fundamental rights and responsibilities of parents in this matter. They sometimes declare that while the parents are the primary educators, they must accept the additional help of the parish program.

Msgr. Michael Wrenn, who wrote the book *Catechisms and Controversies*,

points out that the religious education establishment has for years been promoting a new sort of American Catholic religion. His documentation is very thorough, and recently updated in his book *Flawed Expectations*. Just this past spring, Archbishop Buechlein of Indianapolis, as head of a study committee of bishops, reported at the spring meeting of bishops, that most of the catechisms currently being used in the parishes are "seriously deficient."

I recommend that you read Msgr. Wrenn's two books (which we sell here at Seton). We have reprinted some of Bishop Buechlein's report on the back of this newsletter. Take a look at our Seton website (www.SetonHome.org) to see the complete deficiencies reported by Bishop Buechlein.

I have never seen any list of deficiencies regarding the Baltimore Catechism. In fact, 26 past bishops acclaimed it highly, saying it is "excellent" and "necessary" and "an excellent textbook for Catholic schools and academies throughout the country." You can find the bishops' comments on the web at www.catholic.net/RCC/Catechism.

Do any dioceses have guidelines friendly to the home schoolers?

Yes, several do. Atlanta has the best guidelines for home schoolers because it is according to the teachings of the Church, brief, straightforward, and simple to understand: "An exception to this policy will be made in the case of children schooled at home. The pastor is responsible for seeing that the home school candidates are properly prepared by examining children who are being schooled at home with regard to the teaching they have received and the knowledge they have acquired."

The diocese of Peoria has guidelines which recognize the right and responsibility of parents to give religious education to their children.

The diocese of Pittsburgh has come out with guidelines which state specifically that parents are not required to use

any specific religious education materials, nor are they required to attend any specific parish programs. These guidelines state that children may not be refused any sacrament on the basis of non-participation in any parish program. While the 20-page document contains some language which home schoolers may not appreciate, the numbered-sentence guidelines do follow the Church teachings. In general, we are "cautiously optimistic" about the Pittsburgh guidelines, hoping they will be implemented in the true spirit of the teachings of the Church.

My parish priest says I should use the new *Catechism of the Catholic Church* with my children. Why don't you include it in your curriculum?

If you have seen the 802-page *Catechism*, you can see that it is not written for children. Also, if you study the table of contents, you will see that it covers the basic four parts of the *Catechism of the Council of Trent*, upon which is based the *Baltimore Catechism*. The seven sacraments remain the same, the ten commandments remain the same, the Creed remains the same, and the Our Father remains the same. Unlike some subjects like medicine where there are new discoveries, inventions, and drugs every few years, our Faith was given to us by Jesus Christ and it is not to be changed. While we have learned new insights into the meaning of these four parts of the Faith, children need to be taught the basics long before they study any modern insights. We include references to the new *Catechism* in our senior religion course, and will be including references in our new lesson plans for parents of junior & senior high school students.

There is a lot of conversation in my support group about phonics. Are the programs really different? What am I to believe?

Phonics is a topic of conversation all over the country because it has not been taught in the public schools for many years. Learning to read must be based on

phonics, which is a decoding of the letter-sounds to form words. With phonics, anyone can learn to read any word.

Back in the late sixties and early seventies, when different reading fads came along, people thought that eventually teachers would get back to phonics, especially when it was proven that no one could learn to read without phonics. But the authors had an agenda, and it was not to solve a problem, but to promote certain values or ideas. After thirty years, all educators know that no one can learn to read English unless they learn phonics. However, it is easier to promote certain values and attitudes among the young if they cannot read, or if they do not read widely. Most people don't read one book in a year.

In the last ten or twenty years, various groups, such as parent-operated schools and Christian organizations have come up with phonics programs to sell on the open market. *Sing, Spell, Read, & Write* is one such program, as well as *Hooked on Phonics*. Modern Curriculum Press, a leader in phonics books which supplied the Catholic schools for many years, held strong with phonics (though forced to delete Catholic references) while all other publishers went for the modern fads. The Reading Reform Foundation came into existence, as well as the promotion of Spaulding's Reading-Writing program. Sister Monica of Cincinnati became very popular among Catholics with her parent-intensive program *Professor Phonics*, with an edition for children and another edition for adults.

California recently rejected the non-phonics approach as a dismal failure. So some mainline publishers are now producing two series, one phonetically based, one non-phonetic. In the last few years, we have been writing a Catholic series incorporating Catholic values. Our most recent two-volume *Kindergarten Phonics* has been the result of a couple of years of work. It contains an intensive phonics approach as well as color within the pages, a professionally drawn graphics, and Catholic values.

Incorporating music with learning phonics has become a popular idea, and we encourage that. The latest supplemental series we are producing on CD-ROM will incorporate music.

Some people recommend that I not teach phonics until my boy is eight years old. Is that a good idea?

As the saying goes, "Reading is fundamental." Reading is fundamental to all education because it allows the curious student to browse among all the materials available.

Some little girls learn to read at the age of three and some little boys don't "click" onto the phonetic decoding system until the age of eight. However, most of us parents have learned that by reading stories to our babies, and then reading to them when they are toddlers, moving our finger under the words as we read, children become aware of an exciting world of stories and adventure through the magic of symbols on a printed page. Most children who listen to their parents read are motivated to learn to read at a very young age, usually four or five.

The first step is learning to recognize the letters and their sounds, starting with the short sounds of the vowels. Flash cards are great here. Rhyming words with a variety of letter flash cards, following the program in our phonics books, move the children quickly to read words and sentences.

There are many books at the library based on teaching letters and the sounds of letters using animals and other things of interest to children. There are games that can be played with young children, such as thinking of foods that begin with the various consonant sounds, memory games such as "I went to the store and bought an apple, a banana, a cookie..." and so on. Using the encyclopedia and looking for pictures of things which begin with a certain letter was a strategy I used with my boys. We also read Bible stories and related the names, places, and things to the letters we were studying.

Let's All Be Moderates!

Well, here's a funny one. According to Fr. Neuhaus in *First Things* (October 1997), a group called the Upstate New York Coalition for Democracy has sent a letter to public school teachers and administrators telling them to be on the lookout for "Radical Right" groups.

The letter helpfully lists thirty-four radical groups to be on the lookout for, including the Ku Klux Klan, American Center for Law and Justice, the National Rifle Association, and Focus on the Family. Also listed in the letter are some code words that educrats need to watch out for when dealing with radical right people in disguise. Among these code words are "moral decline of America," "dumbing down our schools," "family values," "back-to-basics," or "parental rights." The irony here is that these are mostly things you hear President Clinton at least paying lip service to all the time. To believe the Coalition for Democracy, perhaps our President is a secret radical rightwinger.

No doubt the Coalition for Democracy is concerned about radical groups because they themselves are so very moderate. The Coalition includes such well-known moderate groups as People for the American Way, the National Education Association, Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice, and Planned Parenthood! It does say quite a lot about public education that these groups expected to receive a favorable reception from the public school community.

Voucher Programs

Researchers from the Harvard Program on Education Policy and Governance recently took a survey of parents involved in the Cleveland, Ohio, voucher program. The interviews they conducted included both parents whose children had received private school vouchers, and parents who had applied for the program but were turned down. (There were approximately 3 times as many applicants as scholarships available.)

Parents whose children were accepted into the scholarship program were

vastly more satisfied with their schools than parents whose children stayed in their public school. For example, 63% of scholarship recipients were happy with the academic quality of their school, while 30% of those still in public schools were satisfied. In the most dramatic difference, 71% of scholarship recipients were happy with the teaching of moral values in their school, as opposed to only 25% in public schools.

The scholarships to private schools in Cleveland are worth as much as \$2,250, which is a bit more than one-



third of the cost-per-pupil of the Cleveland public schools. It would be interesting to work out a mathematical equation along these lines. If private schools cost one-third as much and satisfy twice as many people, does that give us a dollar-to-satisfaction ratio of 6:1 in favor of private education.

Mother Teresa

If you think that being a good person will make you friends with everybody, think again. They crucified Christ, and He told us that if the world hates Christians, remember that the world hated Him first. Which brings us to Mother Teresa. Most people probably did not see the live broadcast of Mother Teresa's funeral, which was aired in the wee hours of the morning in the United States. However, those who did see it were treated to the commentary of Chris-

topher Hitchens, the most virulent critic of Mother Teresa on the face of the earth. Hitchens does not simply disagree with Mother Teresa on certain points; he absolutely despises her, thinks her a complete fraud and an international criminal. Hitchens has written a book against Mother Teresa called *Missionary Position*; he has produced a BBC documentary attacking her. He has called her a "dangerous, sinister person" and the "ghoul of Calcutta." He has said that her fifty-plus years of taking care of the poorest of the poor in Calcutta was just a propaganda exercise to cover up her real agenda of "compelling the faithful to breed." So this was the person that ABC News puts on television to act as a commentator at her funeral.

The fact is, though, that Hitchens is as representative of decadent secularism as Mother Teresa is of Christian love. The real question is not why did Hitchens attack her, but why didn't more people attack her? Her philosophy, one learned from a Jewish carpenter, has nothing in common with enlightened modern thought. The U.S. Senate and House voted to issue a proclamation praising Mother Teresa, but only after being sure to delete anything controversial, such as her opposition to abortion.

It's as if the modern world thinks that Mother Teresa's life can be compartmentalized. They say, "On the one side we can put her silly religious beliefs and her foolish opposition to birth control and abortion, which we don't like. On the other side, we will praise her for her work with the poor, which we at least have to pretend we like." Does anyone ever stop to think that it is precisely those silly beliefs and those foolish ideas which drove her to help the poor and suffering? Is the modern world so foolish and silly as to believe that lives devoted to good works for others can spring from anything other than love of God? If atheism, secularism, and enlightened modern thought can replace sanctifying grace, then let Christopher Hitchens take over for Mother Teresa in the slums of Calcutta. After he toils among the abandoned and dying for fifty years, perhaps he will have something worthwhile to say.

Teaching Writing Skills

by Erin Duffy

The first thing to realize when teaching a child to write is that writing is a skill. Obviously, the gift of a natural talent for writing is a significant factor in determining whether your child will be the next G. K. Chesterton, but it isn't the primary factor. Even G.K. Chesterton had to learn the skill of writing. The nurturing of a budding Chesterton requires practice, patience and encouragement.

Keeping a Journal

A student of writing must write everyday. Perhaps the easiest way to facilitate this practice is by encouraging your child to keep a journal.

A journal is a notebook in which the child writes about specific events or ideas, or it may be a place where he fights out personal battles, or reflects on particular people. The important thing to remember about the journal is that it is a place for practical writing. It is a place for the child to perform some mental calisthenics. Writing in the journal gives the child practice in putting on paper the ideas which are floating in his brain.

The key to the successful use of the journal, though, is not to interrupt this process by insisting on correct grammar, complete sentences, or the perfect word. Just let him practice. Let him become accustomed to the written word, its powers and its deficiencies.

Have your child carry his journal with him on daily excursions to the store or the park. Invite him to write about what he sees. The next time the dinner table becomes the scene of a political discussion, ask him to present his perspective on the issue. The next time he finds himself in the midst of a family argument, have him write about the situation.

Make Writing Positive

One word of warning, though. Never treat writing as a punishment. A child needs to see writing as wings, as a way to soar above the world and capture it. He should never be made to feel that writing is a shackle which confines him to room and desk.

In addition to hours of practice on your child's part, the teaching of writing takes years of patience on your part. Because writing is a skill, your budding author is going to produce what, in your well-read eyes, is quite horrid. Oftentimes you will be perusing stale stories of one-eyed monsters terrorizing small towns or long, tedious descriptions of roller-coaster rides which lasted only forty-five seconds — replete with grammatical errors, punctuation errors and misspellings. But, remember: patience, patience.

Prodding and cajoling your child when he is learning to write will only make him more fearful of writing and perhaps cause him even to resent it. But, through patience and with encouragement, you can coach your child, and cheer him in his literary endeavors.

When you are helping your child to write, remember how you felt when you were learning to write. If you do, both you and your child shall come through this learning experience intact.

Paragraph Writing

The paragraph is the building block of formal rhetorical presentation. In order for a student to be able to create good solid essays in high school, he must master the paragraph in junior high.

The key to a good paragraph is the topic sentence. The topic sentence states what the paragraph is going to discuss. Each topic sentence is composed of

two parts: a "subject" and an "attitude." The subject is that which the paragraph speaks of—"my dog." The attitude of the topic sentence is the assertion the paragraph wishes to make about the subject—"very playful."

One important thing to remember—a topic sentence can not be a simple statement of fact. Take for example the sentence, "The grass is green." What could one possibly write to support that assertion?

Once you have reviewed the topic sentence of your child's paragraph, then review the supporting details in a paragraph. There should be at least three supporting details in a paragraph. For example, returning to our playful puppy paragraph, we might discuss 1) the puppy's affinity for shoes, 2) his relentless tormenting of the cat and 3) his rather wild battles with throw pillows on the living room floor.

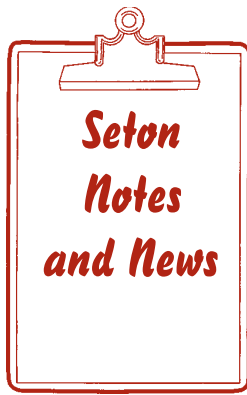
These supporting details provide the topic sentence with validity, with proof. But they are only as successful in accomplishing this as the writer is in making these details come to life. A good phrase to remember is "Show, don't tell." Show me how the puppy chases shoes; don't just tell me he does.

Ending Well

An often-overlooked aspect of the paragraph is the conclusion. The concluding sentence of the paragraph should re-state the ideas presented in the topic sentence. *Tell them what you are going to tell them. Tell them. Tell them what you told them.* This is the structure of a basic paragraph in a nutshell.

Finally, avoid putting a "grade" on your child's writing. Of course, you need to grade some assignments in order to arrive at a quarterly average, but carefully thought-out comments and words of sincere encouragement will accomplish far more than even a high grade.

Erin Duffy is a former Professor of English Literature at Christendom College.



Conferences

Note: Information about Seton conferences is sent by mail to home schoolers on our mailing list in the state, and usually to surrounding states as well. Conferences include talks as well as the sale of Seton textbooks. If your support group is interested in having a conference in your area, please call Mary Lou Warren at Seton.

Seton Conferences

San Antonio, TX: January 31, 1998. St. John Neumann Church. Speakers include Fr. Robert Hermley on *Church Teachings*, Dr. Mary Kay Clark on *Avoiding Burnout*, Dr. William Marra on *The Rebirth of Catholic Faith and Culture*, Mrs. Ginny Seuffert on *Home Schooling in the Large Family*, Dr. Mark Lowery on *The Father's Role*, and Mr.

Jim Likoudis on *Sex Education*. Panel discussion on discipline.

Lafayette, LA: February 14, 1998. St. Francis of Assisi Church. Speakers include Fr. Robert Hermley, Dr. Mary Kay Clark, Dr. Mark Lowery, Dr. William Marra, Mrs. Ginny Seuffert, Mr. Paul Sullivan. Panel discussion on discipline.

Santa Clara, CA: February 28, 1998. Speakers include Fr. Robert Hermley, Dr. Mary Kay Clark, Mrs. Ginny Seuffert, Dr. Thomas Susanka (from Thomas Aquinas College), and Fr. Joseph Fessio. Panel discussion on discipline.

Columbus, OH: March 28, 1998. St. Patrick's Church. Speakers include Fr. Robert Hermley, Dr. Mary Kay Clark, Mr. Paul Sullivan, Greg Lloyd, Dr. William Marra. Panel discussion on discipline.

Ottawa, Ontario, Canada: May 23, 1998.

Other Conferences

Orlando, FL: April 25, 1998. Florida Catholic Home Educators Conference. Dr. Clark speaking.

Harrisburg, PA: April 25, 1998. Catholic Home Schoolers of PA Conference, Holy Name of Jesus Church.

Dr. Mary Kay Clark is often available to speak at state or local home schooling conferences. Please call Seton for more information.

Short Takes

Book Reports are assigned starting in grade four. The reports are to be on books on the provided reading list, but others may be chosen if you call Seton for approval.

We want book reports to be on books that are quality literature, not the currently popular children's books.

Book reports at the elementary level are not just a documentation of reading a book; rather, they are exercises in thinking skills and in essay writing which are intended to prepare a student for the advanced thinking and writing in high school. Christian morals and spiritual attitudes can be developed through reading good books.

Samuel Blumenfeld, well-known educator and writer, wrote, "The alarming decline of literacy is easily the most important cultural phenomenon in America... And it can all be attributed to our education system which has embarked on a deliberate program to dumb down the American people."

The best method of education is reading good books. We encourage you to obtain quality classics or semi-classics for your children. They are classics because people have loved them over several generations. Give your child books such as: *Hans Brinker*, *Robinson Crusoe*, *Captains Courageous*, *Black Beauty*, *Treasure Island*, *Tom Sawyer*, *Little House on the Prairie*, *Sherlock Holmes*, *The Three Musketeers*, *Jane Eyre*, *Father Brown Mysteries*, *Ivanhoe*, *Quo Vadis?*, and *Moby Dick*.

Seton Motto: Adjust the program to fit your child, not your child to fit the program.

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Catechetical Deficiencies

As the Ad Hoc Committee continues to review more and more catechetical texts as to their conformity with the Catechism, we have discovered that there seem to be a number of doctrinal deficiencies common to many of them. We have tried to correct this in requiring that certain additions and/or changes be made in the texts before we find them to be in conformity with the Catechism. We thought the bishops would be interested in knowing the nature of these rather consistent deficiencies in the catechetical texts.

1) *Insufficient attention to the Trinity and the Trinitarian structure of Catholic beliefs and teachings.* Relative to the Trinity, the texts fail most often in presenting it as the central mystery of the Christian faith. The intimate relationship and work of the Persons of the Trinity are not always presented clearly and consistently throughout the texts. The language used in referring to the Persons of the Trinity contributes at times to this lack of clarity. This is most evident in a recognized reluctance to use “Father” for the first person of the Trinity, and, at times, to substitute “Parent God” for God the Father. Particularly, the relationship between Jesus and the Father is often weak. There are times where the word “God” is placed in a sentence where one would expect to find “Father” or “God the Father” since the reference is precisely to the relationship between first and second persons of the Trinity. Although the doctrine of the Trinity may be dutifully repeated throughout a series, it does not become the “inner life” or organizing principle of the texts.

2) *Obscured presentation of the centrality of Christ in salvation history and insufficient emphasis on the divinity of Christ.* Texts fall short, at times, in presenting Jesus as the culmination of the Old Testament and fulfillment of God’s plan for our salvation. The indispensable place of the Incarnation in the plan of salvation is not always sufficiently presented. Jesus as Savior is often overshadowed by Jesus as teacher, model, friend, or brother.

Texts do not present the mystery of the Incarnation in its fullness. Often there appears to be an imbalance in the instruction on the divinity and humanity of Jesus Christ. There is present, at times, a negative undertone in speaking of the divine nature of Christ, as if divinity is equated with being “distant and unreal.” The operative Christology “from below” which is evident in catechetical materials need balance in an equally positive reference for divinity.

3) *Indistinct treatment of the ecclesial context of Catholic beliefs and magisterial teachings.* Catechetical materials do not always clearly present the Church as established by Christ to continue both his presence and his work in the world. The teaching function of the Church and its apostolic nature, as well as the role of the hierarchy and the concept of the leadership of bishops and priests in teaching the Word of God are often under-treated. The mark of unity in the Church is at times lost in a singular emphasis on the Church’s catholicity and diversity.

Excerpted from the report to the U. S. bishops by the Ad Hoc Committee to Oversee the Use of the Catechism

