

COMPENDIUM of the CATECHISM

HOW EAGERLY WE WELCOME the English translation of the new *Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church!*

N.B. We abbreviate it herein as CCCC; and the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* as CCC.

- The CCCC depends entirely on the CCC and
- has **all the essential teachings** in 1/7 of its length.
- It consists of a dialogue between Master and disciple,
- in **598 Questions & Answers** (Q&As).
- It has 15 paintings as vital teaching aids; an index;
- headings/sub-headings of CCC & X-references to it;
- lists of vital catechetical terms: all in **208** pages.
- The Italian original has vernacular & Latin prayers.

Precise/Brief versus Muddled/Evasive

EARLIER ON, *The Question & Answer Catholic Catechism*, by Fr John Hardon S.J., had a prophetic Foreword by Silvio Cardinal Oddi, 28th June, 1981:

"Good catechetical style requires **precision** and **breavity**. Vague authors, therefore eschew [= avoid] it, either because their **thoughts are muddled** or because they are **wily enough not to put down what they really hold in black and white**. Prolix [= waffly] authors avoid a question & answer approach because its success depends on succinct, incisive replies which are beyond them."

MORE ABOUT QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

OUR A Catechism About Catechisms (= ACAC, available as *Handouts* n. 1), fits on both sides of a single A4 page. It can be viewed or downloaded from our website <www.cardinalnewman.com.au>.

ACAC uses 50 Questions & Answers as apologetics for Questions & Answers. It is quasi-sacramental in that "it does what it says", "it effects what it signifies".

It provides purpose and principles for writers of Question & Answer catechisms, **especially on how to make the answers easier to memorize**. Thus:

ACAC 29. *What are advantages of doctrinal formulas?*

Doctrinal formulas make possible exact thinking about the Faith, and suit its expression and explanation. "They provide a uniform way of speaking among the faithful, and, when learnt by heart, they help in its permanent possession."¹

1. *General Catechetical Directory* (GCD) §73, 1971, which was re-issued in 1998 as the *General Directory for Catechesis*.

ACAC 30. *What do doctrinal formulas provide for teachers and adults?*

Doctrinal formulas provide clarity and orthodoxy for teachers and adults and help them avoid vague, confused and erroneous teaching.

ACAC 31. *What do doctrinal formulas provide for children and youth?*

Doctrinal formulas provide children and youth with something their minds can get a grip on. They delight in what is clear, brief and easily assimilated, but resent wasting time and effort mentally chewing cotton wool.

VINDICATION

THE CCCC comes as a powerful vindication of Question & Answer catechisms.

For 25 years, from 2nd February, 1981, until now, all editions of the *Catholic Family Catechism* have used carefully crafted Q&As.

Indeed, its 1981 editions anticipated Pope John Paul II's *Familiaris Consortio* n. 39, of 22nd November, 1981, in being **"a suitable catechism for families... clear, brief easily assimilated by all"**.

ACAC 27. *What did Pope John Paul II say about the use of memory in catechesis?*

Pope John Paul II said that "the blossoms of faith and piety do not grow in the desert places of a memory-less catechesis."

Catechesi Tradendae (CT) §55, 16th October, 1979.

ACAC 28. *What sort of catechesis has been commonplace in Australia?*

In Australia, a memory-less catechesis has been commonplace for many years.

Indeed, since 1981 (and before that, during its gestation), the CFC has suffered under "Pontius Pilate prelates" and their educational/catechetical/bureaucracies. See the brief account in *Catechetical News* n. 181, p. 14 - with names suppressed to protect the guilty, whose probably unwitting, but nevertheless disastrous acts, still bear evil fruit today in the religious illiteracy engendered by many diocesan catechetical experts, who have strenuously evaded any implementation of the Pope's words, cited above, ACAC 27.

Significantly, the Australian editions of the CCC (1994) have incurred a similar fate. The doctrinal battle against the ongoing errors of the 16th century Protestant Deformation continues unrelentingly today.

COMMON BACKGROUND to the CCC, CCCC and CFC

ACAC 17. *What did Blessed John XXIII say was the greatest concern of the Second Vatican Council?*

Blessed John XXIII said "the greatest concern of the Second Vatican Council is that the Sacred Deposit of Christian Doctrine should be more effectively guarded and taught."¹

1. Opening Speech, 11-11-62; quoted from Abbott's *Documents of Vatican II*, p. 713; to which Pope John Paul alludes in his authorization of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, p. 2.

ACAC 18. *At the 1985 Extraordinary Synod what did the Bishops say about the Second Vatican Council?*

At the 1985 Extraordinary Synod the Bishops said, *inter alia*, there had been "a defective understanding and application of the Second Vatican Council."

2. This accurately translates *defectuoso intellectu et applicatione* in the *Final Report* (FR). Contrast its St Paul Edition p. 19, where the official translation was defective in that it said, "incomplete understanding and lack of application." as though all that was needed was 'more of the same.'

The 1985 Extraordinary Synod of Bishops in Rome was called by Pope John Paul II to assess the state of the Church twenty years after the end of the Second Vatican Council.

ACAC 19. *At the 1985 Extraordinary Synod what did the Bishops say about the state of catechesis?*

At the 1985 Extraordinary Synod the Bishops said that "everywhere in the world today the transmission to the young of the faith and moral values deriving from the Gospel is in peril. The knowledge of the faith and the acceptance of the moral order are often reduced to a minimum." FR p. 31.

DESIGNING DOCTRINAL FORMULAS

THE CCCC encourages, not abrogates, approved simpler texts which conform to its content, as does CCC n.2: "These IN-BRIEF summaries may suggest to local catechists brief summary formulae that could be memorized."

ACAC 32. *What are essential qualities for catechism answers?*

The essential qualities for catechism answers are that they express true doctrine in children's words and concepts, and are designed for memorization.

ACAC 33. *What are the desirable qualities for catechism answers?*

The desirable qualities for catechism answers are that they are carefully tested with children, set out in sense-lines like poetry, repeat the wording of the question, use Scripture and Liturgy, and are clear, brief and easily assimilated by all.

1. The shorter and simpler the answers, the harder they are to construct.

ACAC 35. *Why should catechism answers be written in sense-lines?*

Catechism answers should be written in sense-lines to make it easier for children to read them aloud, especially for poor readers, and to help children understand and memorize them.

THE CCCC offers authoritative Q&As for all, though with lots more detail than younger children could cope with. The English and Italian both omit two catechetical techniques which help adults as well as children:-

1. Answers do not necessarily repeat the words of Questions.
2. Answers are not written in sense-lines.

Perhaps future editions will be amended?

CONTEXT OF THE COMPENDIUM - COMPARISONS

CATECHISMS	CCCC 2005	CCC In-Briefs	OGC ¹	CFC ² 1981 x 2	CFCAE ³ 1992	CFCDE ⁴ 2004	Hardon 1981
Q&As	598	Not in Q&As	386	404	500	50 (only fifty!)	1,701
Words	About 32,000	About 19,000	About 8,100	About 7,200	About 10,000	About 1,250⁵	About 79,000
Words/Answers	60	—	21	18	20	25	47
Total Pages	205	Part of CCC	60	224	136	128	334
Pictures	15 coloured	4 coloured	11 shaded	20 B&W	55 B&W	88 B&W	—
Who for?	Adult/youth	Adult/youth	Family/general	Family/general	Family/general	Family/general	Adult/youth
Memorable	Not likely	No	Proven in use	Yes	Yes	YES - easy!	no
Authority	Pope Benedict XVI	Pope Benedict XVI	Archbishop of Sydney	Recommended By Rome	Bishop's <i>Imprimatur</i>	Rome praised author for it	Rome praised author for it

1. OGC = Old Green Catechism, which was part of the seamless continuity from the *Roman Catechism* of the Council of Trent until now in 2006.

2. CFC = *Catholic Family Catechism Pocket Edition* 2nd February, 1981, and *Revised Pocket Edition*, 6th August, 1981

3. CFCAE = *Catholic Family Catechism Apostle's Edition*.

4. CFCDE = *Catholic Family Catechism Disciples' Edition*.

5. Excluding the 4 Q&As for the Creed, Ten Commandments, *Our Father*, *Hail Mary*, which make up a quarter of the material to be memorized.

MEMORIZATION for children's catechisms

WE MUST heed Pope John Paul II's memorization list prescribed in *Catechesis in our Time* §55:

1. the words of Jesus
2. important Bible passages
3. the Creeds
4. The Ten Commandments
5. liturgical texts
6. essential prayers
7. key doctrinal ideas etc. (The *et cetera* is in the original).

See ACAC 45:
This is an example of how memory and understanding work together

All these items are included in the *Catholic Family Catechism Disciples' Edition*, excepting only item 5, for which a current edition of the Missal is needed.

CONCLUSION

IT IS OF THE UTMOST URGENCY that this initiative of our late and beloved Pope John Paul II and his successor Pope Benedict XVI be put to immediate use in homes, parishes, schools, universities, seminaries...

The power and strength of the CCCC, and thereby its capacity for good influence, are in its:

- clarity and brevity;
- approval of the Question & Answer format;
- encouragement for simpler Q&A catechisms.

God may be giving us our last opportunity to achieve 'the greatest concern' of the Second Vatican Council as enunciated by Blessed John XXIII (see above: ACAC 17). Such doctrinal catechesis is the foundation for a return to Confession, for vocations to the priesthood, for a restoration of Religious Life, for conceptions in marriage instead of contraception, for genuine ecumenism, the conversion of Australia, and social justice.

May God protect the CCCC from the studied apathy and even contempt shown towards the CCC and doctrinal orthodoxy. Therefore:

- **Buy it:** then read, mark, learn and inwardly digest...
- **Propose it for adult education** in all parish groups.
- **Suggest** its helpfulness to Catholic school-teachers.
- **Ask** your priest to promote it, in the name of the Pope.
- **Study** it in the light of *A Catechism About Catechisms*.
- **Use** it with *Catholic Family Catechism Disciples' Edition*.