

# Universal catechism could eliminate doctrinal questions, Holy Father says

By Agostino Bono  
**Vatican City** — A universal catechism, used as a reference for locally produced catechisms, could eliminate instructions and interpretations that are opposed to official Church teachings, Pope John Paul II said.

In comments June 28, the pope expressed hope that the universal catechism would be ready by 1990, the 25th anniversary of the end of the Second Vatican Council.

He also spoke about a study of the nature of bishops' conferences.

The 1985 extraordinary Synod of Bishops recommended the catechism and the bishops' conference study.

The universal catechism recommendation stems from the "demand currently felt in the Church for a greater clarity and doctrinal security to put an end to teachings or interpretations of faith and morals that disagree among themselves or are opposed to the universal magisterium," the pope said.

Drafting the universal catechism will involve consultations with the world's bishops, he told a meeting of the Vatican Curia, the Church's central administrative agencies, and cardinals in Rome.

On June 10, the Vatican announced that a 12-member commission had been formed to prepare the document. The commission is to be headed by Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, head of the Vatican Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith.

After a draft has been prepared there will be "consultation with the Eastern churches and with bishops' conferences," the pope said.

The pope also announced that a synod-recommended study on the theological and doctrinal nature of bishops' conferences is to be headed by Cardinal Bernard Gantin, head of the Vatican Congregation for Bishops.

The study will aim to clarify "doctrinal and pastoral problems" that have arisen because of the growth and development of bishops' conferences, he said.

The pope did not mention any specific problems. During the synod, however, delegates disagreed about whether bishops' conferences shared in the Church's teaching

authority and about their relationship to the Vatican Curia.

"It is true that there is no lack of valuable contributions by bishops' conferences, but the growth of their structures and influence also give birth to doctrinal and pastoral problems, resulting from the logic of their development and their importance," the pope said.

"The desired study, therefore, will concern doctrinal aspects about the nature and authority of bishops' conferences," he added.

The study will involve consultations with local church leaders and Curia officials, the pope said.

Pope John Paul added that the Vatican hoped to have a preliminary report ready by autumn on a synod-recommended study about whether the concept of subsidiarity as applied in society can be applied to the Catholic Church.

The concept of subsidiarity says that authority and responsibility for issues should be exercised at the lowest level of society capable of dealing with the specific matter.

The pope said the study of subsidiarity is "strictly linked to that of the nature and scope of bishops' conferences."

But among Church structures, communion and participation are better terms than subsidiarity in expressing hierarchical relationships, he said.

Pope John Paul noted that his predecessors, Popes Pius XI and Pius XII, had said that subsidiarity is valid for general society but should be applied "without prejudice to the hierarchical structure" of the Church.

Subsidiarity is "a subtle question that originates in problems of a social, not ecclesial, nature," the pope said.

To avoid using the term "subsidiarity," Vatican II and the Code of Canon Law "have encouraged participation and communion among Church organisms," the pope added.

"As you can see, it is not only a question of terminology, but also of concepts," he said.

"The conciliar ecclesiology, rich in new ideas and terms, is also careful not to create unnecessary tensions between the theological and pastoral order," he said.



Bishop Matthew H. Clark

## Along the Way

A correspondent, commenting on my recent column about the ministry of bishop, observed that I ought to simplify my life. In the column, I had strung out a variety of words indicating what I judged to be the more important aspects of my ministry.

My friend noted that the list did not attend adequately to prayer, preaching and teaching, which she judged to be the most important work of any bishop. Her point, made in a constructive and helpful manner, was that I was doing too much of the lesser things and not enough of the greater.

I am convinced that she is correct when she makes that statement about me. It is my guess that she might well be able to make it about a great number of people and not be too far off the mark. Do we all do too much of the lesser things and not enough of the greater? Do we give too much time and energy to what we think of as the noisy, urgent questions of the day and too little to the quieter, but deeply important questions of life?

These are fruitful questions for all of us because at one level they make us aware of the importance of our mental and physical health. At another level, they can draw us to the deep and quiet places of the heart where we recognize our need for God and God's loving presence to us.

If you struggle in any manner with questions of overextension, lack of direction or satisfying priorities, this may be a good time to pray and think about what and how much you are doing and how you may be able to change that.

As my correspondent friend offered help to me in her letter so I will share

with you some notes I have collected on this theme:

- We need to take responsibility for our own lives and for the decisions that will help us live in a more humane manner.

- At the same time, we do not live in isolation. Our decisions affect others and theirs affect us. If we seek others, we can often find help and understanding in our efforts to change. The likelihood of that is increased as we are willing to speak honestly with others who care about us, about what is going on inside us.

- While we want to be generous to others, we need to care for our own freedom. Otherwise we will not be able to love or serve in the manner of Christ, and what we do can too easily become a burden to be resented rather than an opening to new life.

- When the demands on us made by one or another person are too great, we need to make that known. There can be a price to that, but it won't be as high as the surrender of our own freedom.

- Coming to greater freedom involves qualitative questions. What do I really want? What does God want of me? What are the values, goods and loves that sustain me, even help me grow, when things get tough?

- There are no magic answers to these questions, nor can we answer them once and for all time in our lives. We change. Circumstances change. We will find life in these questions if we root our continuing search in prayer, share our search with those who love us and are willing to follow the Lord wherever His love leads us.

Peace to all.

# Toledo pastor tells student to change views on abortion

By Sister Mary Ann Walsh  
**Washington (NC)** — The pastor of a Toledo, Ohio, parochial school has said that an 11-year-old student must change her position on abortion in order to re-enroll in the school this fall.

Father Richard Miller, pastor of St. Agnes Parish, stated his position in an Aug. 10 letter to Conception Eason, mother of Sarabeth Eason, who had been scheduled to enter sixth grade at St. Agnes school in the fall.

In his letter to Mrs. Eason, former assistant director of a Toledo abortion clinic, Father Miller asked that Sarabeth "desist

and stop from public and exposed support" of a pro-choice position and asked that she "write a letter to the principal (stating) that she does not personally support abortion."

Last January, Sarabeth and her parents signed a pro-choice newspaper ad celebrating the 1973 Supreme Court decision legalizing abortion. In a January television interview during a pro-choice rally, Sarabeth also spoke in favor of the right to abortion.

Father Miller, who had spoken personally with Mrs. Eason about her stand on abortion before sending the letter, wrote that he took his position "because Sarabeth is carried along with your enthusiasm, made out of sympathy, feelings of mercy and rightness, as you understand it, and has been so public" in her support for abortion through TV appearances and in the ad in the public press.

Father Miller told Mrs. Eason that her position with the Catholic Church is "very awkward."

"I think as so publicly supportive, as associate director (of the abortion clinic) and as so determined, and publicly so, you yourself, possibly, could be asked to leave the Catholic Church," he said.

Neither Mrs. Eason nor her daughter could be reached for comment but Glen Eason, Sarabeth's father, said in an Aug. 18 telephone interview that he was angered by the letter which, he said, was telling his daughter she could not attend the school "because she had exercised her constitutional right to free speech."

He said that Sarabeth would not comply with the demands, and quoted her as saying, "There's no way I'm going to do that."

Mr. Eason also said that he is considering a lawsuit against the school which, he said, receives government funding for textbooks and busing.

Mr. Eason, a Lutheran, also objected to what he called the "thinly veiled threat of excommunication" against his wife. He said that his wife's position is that she was "born and raised Catholic and will continue to go to church and receive the sacraments" even if excommunicated. He added that his wife and daughter disagree with the Catholic Church only on the issue of abortion.

Mr. Eason also said that his wife has left her job at the abortion clinic, which was

firebombed last May, because after the bombing she "felt the clinic was not operating at full potential."

Frances Kissling, head of Catholics for a Free Choice, called Father Miller's position "very unfair."

Toledo Bishop James Hoffman supports Father Miller's stand, according to James Richards, the Toledo diocesan communications director.

"The reason for the actions and the bishop's endorsement are a conviction on the part of Bishop Hoffman that the pro-life teachings of the Church are not merely reserved for Sunday homilies but must permeate all the institutions of the Church, particularly our schools," Richards said.

### Diocesan Appointments

Bishop Matthew H. Clark has announced the following diocesan appointments, which are effective September 1:

**Deacon Patrick A. Graybill** from campus ministry, Rochester Institute of Technology Parish, to parish deacon, St. Mary's Church of the Deaf, Rochester.

**Deacon Kenneth A. Scarciotta** from parish deacon, Holy Redeemer/St. Francis Xavier, Rochester, to parish deacon, St. Ambrose, Rochester.

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