

# Scholars criticize Vatican draft of universal catechism

By Jerry Filteau  
Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON — A panel of Catholic scholars sharply criticized the Vatican draft of *Catechism for the Universal Church* during a press conference Jan. 28 at the Woodstock Center in Washington.

The panel expressed concern about deficiencies because, in the words of Bishop Raymond F. Lucker of New Ulm, Minn., when the final document is published it "will have an enormous impact on the life of the church."

"I'm hoping there will be a substantial change in the text," he said.

Other panelists criticized the catechism's structure, its use of Scripture, and its use of natural law rather than Christian discipleship as the framework for moral teaching.

They described it as containing theology from the 1950s in many ways. They said it was inconsistent and selective in its use of official church teachings from the Second

Vatican Council and the postconciliar era, ignoring or even contradicting some important insights in conciliar and postconciliar teaching.

Panelists also said the catechism draft failed to make needed distinctions between central or essential truths of faith and peripheral elements, and between established doctrine and theological views.

Too much that is not a matter of faith is treated as if it were, said Jesuit Father Francis J. Buckley of the University of San Francisco, author of several catechetical works. Unless the final document makes clearer distinctions between matters of faith and those of church discipline or theological opinion, the result will be widespread confusion, he said.

"Among all of us there was a genuine concern that this document succeed," said Sister Mary C. Boys, a Sister of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary and professor of theology and religious education at Boston College.

But panelists also reached a consensus that the draft has serious problems, she added. "I found this document deeply disappointing," she said, especially in its use of Scripture.

The draft document was sent out to the world's bishops last December for review and consultation.

Jesuit Father Thomas J. Reese, a research fellow at Woodstock Center, convened a private symposium Jan. 27-28 of 15 U.S. experts in catechetics, Scripture and systematic, sacramental and moral theology.

The symposium results are to be sent to the National Conference of Catholic Bishops in the United States and to other bishops' conferences around the world to help them in their own analysis of the draft, Father Reese said.

Bishop Lucker, a longtime specialist in catechetics and the only bishop at the symposium, said one of the biggest problems bishops face in responding to the draft is

"lack of time."

The Vatican has asked all bishops to submit their criticisms and suggestions by May 31.

Lawrence Cunningham, a professor of theology at the University of Notre Dame, said strengths in the document included:

- "For the first time a good deal of attention is paid to social ethics in a document meant to be an instrument of catechesis, a teaching instrument."

- "There is an enormous amount of background from the traditions of the church... not only of the West, but of the East as well."

One of the draft's "most glaring weaknesses," he said, is that it "suffers from what computer people would call an 'information overload,'" with no guidance as to "what's more important and what's less important."

Cunningham and others on the panel focused on the draft's structure as one of its weakest points.

## Pope appoints budget chief

By John Thavis  
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY — In a major Vatican financial appointment, Pope John Paul II has named Cardinal Edmund C. Szoka of Detroit to head the Holy See's budget and accounting office.

Cardinal Szoka, a 62-year-old Polish-American and a personal friend of the pope, was named Jan. 22 as president of the Prefecture for the Economic Affairs of the Holy See, the Vatican said. He replaces Cardinal Giuseppe Caprio, who was retiring at age 75.

The Vatican made no immediate announcement regarding Cardinal Szoka's replacement in Detroit.

Cardinal Szoka will run an office that has played an increasingly important role in the Vatican's effort to cut spending and reduce its annual operating deficit. As head of the "prefecture," as the agency is called in curial circles, he will act essentially as Vatican budget director.

The prefecture gathers income and expense figures of Vatican agencies, double checks them and puts them into a composite budget. Its figures tell how much money entered the Vatican, how it was spent and how much is needed to cover the shortfall.

The prefecture's members have worked closely with a specially appointed council of cardinals that has been looking into ways to reduce the Vatican's annual shortfall, which totaled \$44 million in 1988. The shortfalls have been offset largely by the proceeds of the worldwide, annual Peter's Pence collection.

As archbishop of Detroit since 1981, Cardinal Szoka administered an archdiocese of some 1.5 million Catholics, including more than 300 parishes. His 1988 decision to close 30 parishes in a cost-cutting effort was highly controversial and was appealed by some parishioners to the Vatican, which upheld the cardinal's decision.

In 1989, the pope named Cardinal Szoka to the Council of Cardinals to Study the Organizational and Economic Problems of the Holy See. The approximately 15-member group generally meets twice a year, and it last met in Rome in November to consider past and projected budget figures and cost-cutting measures.

Cardinal Szoka served as treasurer of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops in 1981-1984.

The appointment of a resident archbishop to a top Vatican financial position is considered unusual. The prefecture was established in 1967, and its two previous presidents have been veterans of Vatican administration.

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