

Catechism seen as aid to bishops

METUCHEN, N.J. (CNS) — The church's new general catechism should help "revitalize the whole catechetical effort," said Bishop Edward T. Hughes of Metuchen.

But it's meant mainly to help bishops get more involved in the catechetical process, not as a textbook to be handed out to students, he said.

Bishop Hughes is chairman of the bishops' Subcommittee on the Implementation of the Catechism of the Catholic Church, a group of bishops and experts working under the U.S. Catholic Conference Committee on Education to help bishops and catechetical leaders prepare for the new document and implement it when it comes out early next year.

Pope John Paul II approved the final text in June, but the Vatican is holding off its public release until translations into

the major languages can be completed, reviewed and approved — a process that is expected to take at least until January.

"It is the bishops' responsibility to make sure that the faith is presented to their people in a way they can understand, a way they can use," Bishop Hughes said in an interview with his diocesan newspaper, *The Monitor*.

For that reason, he said, the text, titled "Catechism of the Catholic Church," is addressed primarily to bishops. Through them it is aimed at writers and publishers of catechetical materials, religious education directors and coordinators, priests and catechists.

Bishop Hughes said the new document's first objective is to achieve a balance between the presentation of doctrinal content and the level of a student's understanding. A scope and



AP/Wide World Photos
Pope John Paul II, shown here kissing a young girl on the forehead as he arrives in Budapest, Hungary, in 1991, recently approved the final text of the "Catechism and the Catholic Church."

sequence chart will help those in religious education assure that balance, he added.

He said he believes in modern catechetical approaches and does not view the new catechism as a criticism of them.

At the same time there have been gaps that have concerned some Catholics, he said. "There

may be too much emphasis placed on process and not enough on basic doctrine."

"The new catechism will not have the same format as the Baltimore Catechism that nourished so many of us," Bishop Hughes said. "It's not a series of questions and answers, it's not to be handed out to students. It will be a basis for textbooks, national catechetical directories and local catechisms."

He said implementation will involve information and training sessions for bishops and national catechetical publishers as well as for diocesan officials and local priests and catechists. A committee of bishops will work with publishers on revising catechetical materials.

"This will take some time," the bishop said. "We're not going to do it overnight."



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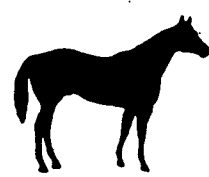
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