

# Religion Textbook Review Worksheet

## I. The Series As a Whole

Name of Series \_\_\_\_\_

Publisher \_\_\_\_\_

Copyright Date \_\_\_\_\_

Reviews \_\_\_\_\_

The *GCD*, *GDC*, *NCD*, *NDC*, and *GDSCM* insist that the Christian message must be both authentic and complete and must be presented in its entirety. To do this well, catechetical programs are designed to reflect a sensitivity to the growth and developmental level of the student. Curricula should be properly sequenced, presenting essential truths in a manner appropriate to the age group (*NCD* 181). The *GDSCM* further takes into account a hierarchy of the truths of faith insofar as they give priority to the foundational mysteries in the Creed. The *GDSCM* does not prescribe a particular order in which the truths are to be presented, but suggests that a variety of resources, learning strategies, and methodologies will be used for “groups and persons of diverse interests, needs, ages, and abilities” (*GDSCM* p. 5, p.2). The *NDC* offers guidelines for catechetical texts (*NDC*, 68, p.283-284).

### Evaluation Code

- |                          |  |
|--------------------------|--|
| 3 = Outstanding          | Fulfills the criteria exceptionally well                       |
| 2 = Satisfactory         | Adequately fulfills the criteria                               |
| 1 = Minimally Acceptable | Partially fulfills the criteria: needs supplementary resources |
| 0 = Unacceptable         | Does not fulfill the criteria                                  |

Criteria	Circle One
1. The scope of the series is clearly explained so as to reveal the Christian mystery in its entirety, reinforcing truths and treating them in greater depth in successive years.	3 – 2 – 1 – 0
2. The program as a whole reflects the norms and guidelines outlined in the <i>NCD</i> , <i>NDC</i> , <i>CCC</i> and <i>GDSCM</i> and others official documents reference.	3 – 2 – 1 – 0
3. Truths receive emphasis proportionate to the importance they hold within the total body of revealed truth.	3 – 2 – 1 – 0
4. The program is sequenced so as to present essential truths of faith in an understandable and logical manner that corresponds to the stage of the student’s development.	3 – 2 – 1 – 0
5. The individual texts in the this series consistently correspond to the age level and ability of the student who will use them in regard to:	
- Readability	3 – 2 – 1 – 0
- Graphics and art work	3 – 2 – 1 – 0
- Relationship to life experiences	3 – 2 – 1 – 0
- Presentation of doctrine	3 – 2 – 1 – 0
- Prayer and worship	3 – 2 – 1 – 0
6. The series suggest a wide variety of media.	3 – 2 – 1 – 0
7. The series incorporates various methodologies.	3 – 2 – 1 – 0
8. As a whole, the series develops the catechetical dimensions of message, community, worship, service, and missionary spirit and presents the concepts of creed, sacraments, Christian life, and prayer.	3 – 2 – 1 – 0

### Further comments on the Series as a Whole:

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# Religion Textbook Review Worksheet

II.

**Individual Textbooks**

Grade Level Reviewed \_\_\_\_\_  
 Title of Textbook \_\_\_\_\_  
 Publisher \_\_\_\_\_

**A. Format**

Catechetical materials will reflect cultural diversity and will include a broad variety of learning activities that express the Gospel message as fully as possible. "All catechetical textbooks should be culturally appropriate and reflect the real-life situations of those who use them" (*NDC*, 68 A, p. 284). "Catechetical materials should be adapted to accommodate cultural, racial, and ethnic pluralism..." (*NCD* 181). Because Christian faith comes alive in all cultures and is expressed in many ways, "...Catechetical materials should use language, customs, and symbols familiar to those being taught" (*GDSCM* 4). The graphics, as well, will reflect diversity and avoid racial, ethnic, and gender stereotypes.

**Evaluation Code**

- 3 = Outstanding                      Fulfills the criteria exceptionally well
- 2 = Satisfactory                      Adequately fulfills the criteria
- 1 = Minimally Acceptable          Partially fulfills the criteria: needs supplementary resources
- 0 = Unacceptable                      Does not fulfill the criteria

Criteria	Circle One
1. The text reviewed presents a broad cultural representation.	3 – 2 – 1 – 0
2. There is evidence in the text of honest and fair representation of:	
- Various races of cultures	3 – 2 – 1 – 0
- Both genders	3 – 2 – 1 – 0
- Other religious beliefs where they are mentioned	3 – 2 – 1 – 0
- Various family groupings (single parent, blended, extended, etc.)	3 – 2 – 1 – 0
3. The text uses short, clear sentences and complete sentence titles.	3 – 2 – 1 – 0
4. The text layout is uncomplicated and easy to follow.	3 – 2 – 1 – 0
5. The text provides an appropriate balance between information to be read and learning activities to be experienced.	3 – 2 – 1 – 0
6. The graphics in this text:	
- Are balanced between pictures, contemporary photos, charts and graphs.	3 – 2 – 1 – 0
- Are appropriate for the age of the learner.	3 – 2 – 1 – 0
- Contain examples of good Christian art.	3 – 2 – 1 – 0
- Are representative of various races, genders, cultures, ages, and family groupings.	3 – 2 – 1 – 0

**Further comments on the Format:**

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# Religion Textbook Review Worksheet

## B. Content

The bishops of the United States in the *GDSCM* (5, 6) identify the place of catechetical materials in assisting catechists to accomplish four tasks: to proclaim Christ’s message, to develop community, to lead people to worship and prayer, and to motivate them to serve others (*NCD* 30, 32, 213). These four aims of catechesis are found in doctrinally sound catechetical materials. The evaluation statements in the section are organized to include these aims.

### 1. Message:

The fundamental message of catechesis is focused on the Trinity (*CCC* 234, *NDC* 25 B, p.77) and is centered on the mystery of Jesus Christ. Both the *CCC* (426) and the *CT* (5) insist that the “heart of catechesis” is the person of Jesus of Nazareth. The *CCC* (1698), *NDC* 25 A, p.75), and the *GDSCM* (14) also emphasize the Christocentric nature of all catechesis. God as Father and Spirit are presented authentically and at a level appropriate to the interest and ability of the student (*NCD* 177, 188). Methodologies for teaching creedal statements are also adapted according to the ability of the student. Doctrine is presented clearly and can be distinguished from opinions and interpretations (*GDSCM* 6, 86; *NDC* 68 B, p.283).

### Evaluation Code

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2 = Satisfactory	Adequately fulfills the criteria
1 = Minimally Acceptable	Partially fulfills the criteria: needs supplementary resources
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Criteria	Circle One
1. In this particular text of the series it is clearly evident that the mystery of Jesus Christ is the central message being explored.	3 – 2 – 1 – 0
2. The text presents a positive image of God as present and active in the world.	3 – 2 – 1 – 0
3. The text treats the basic truths of faith in a manner that highlights the priority of:	
- The mystery of the Trinity	3 – 2 – 1 – 0
- The life, death, and resurrection of Jesus	3 – 2 – 1 – 0
- The Spirit alive in the Church	3 – 2 – 1 – 0
4. The content presented is at a level appropriate to the interest and ability of the student.	3 – 2 – 1 – 0
5. When presented, important doctrinal formulas are clearly distinguished in a lesson.	3 – 2 – 1 – 0
6. Formulas and facts for memorization are introduced gradually and are adapted to the level and ability of the student.	3 – 2 – 1 – 0

**Further comments on the Message content:**

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# Religion Textbook Review Worksheet

## 2. Community

An integration of doctrine and life experience is found in the faith life of the parish community. To foster this integration, catechetical materials will suggest methods that allow students to apply what they have learned through discussions, shared projects, and social interaction (*GDSCM 24*).

Catechetical materials encourage the students to participate in the wider parish community through ministry, liturgical celebrations, and service.

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Criteria	Circle One
7. The text suggests experiences in which students apply the message of Jesus to real-life situations.	3 – 2 – 1 – 0
8. The text fosters a sense of community by offering:	
- Discussion of life experiences common to this age group.	3 – 2 – 1 – 0
- Opportunities to explore faith experiences at the level and ability of the student.	3 – 2 – 1 – 0
- Shared activities or projects that require cooperation.	3 – 2 – 1 – 0
- Periodic opportunities for celebration and social interaction.	3 – 2 – 1 – 0
9. The text assists the students in relating to the wider Church community by encouraging them:	
- To be aware of their parish community.	3 – 2 – 1 – 0
- To understand, at their level and ability, what unites them to the Church community.	3 – 2 – 1 – 0
- To celebrate the events of the Church community.	3 – 2 – 1 – 0
- To understand, at their level and ability, the historical continuity of the Church community.	3 – 2 – 1 – 0
- To partake in the evangelization mission of the Church.	3 – 2 – 1 – 0

**Further comments on the Community content:**

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# Religion Textbook Review Worksheet

## 3. Worship

Prayer is an integral part of all catechesis. Catechetical materials will offer opportunities and suggestions for liturgical celebrations, scripture reflections, and both spontaneous and formal prayer (*GDSCM* 52, 76). The *CCC* emphasizes the importance of liturgical prayer and catechesis (1075) as well as personal prayer (2688).

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Criteria	Circle One
10. The text offers a variety of opportunities for class or group prayer including:	
- Formal prayer (e.g., The Lord's Prayer).	3 – 2 – 1 – 0
- Prepared prayers within the text to be recited as a group.	3 – 2 – 1 – 0
- Shared, spontaneous prayer.	3 – 2 – 1 – 0
- Liturgical/sacramental celebrations.	3 – 2 – 1 – 0
- Shared scripture reading/reflections	3 – 2 – 1 – 0
11. Suggestions are made for prayer services or liturgies that call for planning by teachers and students.	3 – 2 – 1 – 0
12. Suggestions are made to encourage personal reflection to enhance communication with God in prayer including:	
- Times of silent reflection	3 – 2 – 1 – 0
- Opportunities for guided meditation according to the level and ability of the student.	3 – 2 – 1 – 0
- Opportunities to write personal reflections and prayer.	3 – 2 – 1 – 0

Further comments on the Worship content:

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# Religion Textbook Review Worksheet

## 4. Christian Living and Service:

A Christian response expresses the internalization of Gospel values (*GDSCM* 74). Catechetical materials will assist students to “observe, explore, interpret, and judge their experiences, ascribe a Christian meaning to their lives, and act according to the norms of faith and love” (*NCD* 181). A Christian response thus will take the form of service – to family, parish, and communities both local and global – according to the level and abilities of the student (*GDSCM* 78).

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Criteria	Circle One
13. Students are encouraged to discover the Christian response to the life situations they face.	3 – 2 – 1 – 0
14. Students are directed to examine their actions to determine if they are consistent with Gospel values.	3 – 2 – 1 – 0
15. Students are assisted in forming their consciences according to Gospel values.	3 – 2 – 1 – 0
16. Students are challenged to respond in service according to their level and ability to:	
- Their families.	3 – 2 – 1 – 0
- The parish family.	3 – 2 – 1 – 0
- The local community.	3 – 2 – 1 – 0
- The world community.	3 – 2 – 1 – 0
In the texts being considered,	
17. The text clearly states the call to a just and peaceful lifestyle according to the level and ability of the student.	3 – 2 – 1 – 0
18. The text encourages a loving yet critical dialogue between the student, the Church, and the civic community according to the level and ability of the student.	3 – 2 – 1 – 0

Further comments on the Christian Living and Service content:

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# Religion Textbook Review Worksheet

## C. Assistance for the Catechist

Catechists' manuals will provide "an explanation of the message of salvation,...psychological and pedagogical advice; suggestions and methods" (NCD 264). It will also "suggest a variety of strategies, activities and resources that can enrich instruction, deepen understanding, and facilitate the integration of doctrine and life" (GDSCM 83).

### Evaluation Code

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Criteria	Circle One
1. The catechist's manual includes adequate background material for the catechist to understand the historical background and doctrinal content of the concepts presented in each lesson.	3 – 2 – 1 – 0
2. The catechist's manual is logically sequenced and easy to follow.	3 – 2 – 1 – 0
3. The manual contains:	
- Advice about the overall development of the student at that level.	3 – 2 – 1 – 0
- Suggestions for using various methodologies.	3 – 2 – 1 – 0
- Suggestions for developing a sense of community in the classroom.	3 – 2 – 1 – 0
4. The manual assists the catechist in planning each lesson with regard to:	
- The life experience of the student.	3 – 2 – 1 – 0
- A clear presentation of the faith message.	3 – 2 – 1 – 0
- Activities that will help the student internalize the lesson.	3 – 2 – 1 – 0
- Prayer or service experiences for sharing faith.	3 – 2 – 1 – 0
5. The manual corresponds well to the student text.	3 – 2 – 1 – 0
6. The manual includes bibliographical references for the catechist (books, videos, films, music, etc.)	3 – 2 – 1 – 0

**Further comments on the Assistance for the Catechist content:**

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# Religion Textbook Review Worksheet

## D. Resources for Parent, Family, and Parish Involvement

“Catechetical textbook series should also include materials specifically designed to assist parents in their roles as the primary catechists of their children” (NDC, 68 B, p. 285). Good catechetical materials will recognize, aid, and celebrate the primary role of parents and family in developing the faith life of children (CCC 1656). While “education in the faith by the parents should begin in the child’s earliest years,” the parish is a “privileged” place for the catechesis of both children and their parents (CCC 2226). The RCIA makes clear the role of the parish community in providing “suitable catechesis” to assist catechumens on their “spiritual journey.” It further notes that catechumens “become familiar with the Christian way of life and are helped by the example and support of sponsors, godparents, and the entire Christian community” (RCIA 75.2). The impact of the community-centered process of initiation on catechetical materials results in the emphasis within those materials on the importance of communities of faith, both family and parish, in providing “suitable catechesis” for children, youth, and adults.

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Criteria	Circle One
1. The student text includes notes/pages for parent/family involvement:	
- That adequately summarize the unit/lesson content.	3 – 2 – 1 – 0
- That suggest reinforcing activities to be shared in the home.	3 – 2 – 1 – 0
- That suggest possible areas of study and enrichment for the parent.	3 – 2 – 1 – 0
2. Parent materials are available which parallel and support the themes in the student text.	3 – 2 – 1 – 0
3. There are materials designed specifically for parents that focus on particular catechetical topics (e.g. sacraments).	3 – 2 – 1 – 0
4. The text suggests ways in which families can participate in the parish community.	3 – 2 – 1 – 0
5. The text offers practical ideas to assist catechetical leaders in communicating with and eliciting support from the parish community.	3 – 2 – 1 – 0

**Further comments on the Parent/Family/Parish Involvement content:**

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# Religion Textbook Review Worksheet

## E. Additional Resources

Instructional media and a variety of additional activities will accompany catechetical materials. “Arts, crafts, dramatics, mime, dance, role playing, simulation or instructional games, music, storytelling, visuals, videotapes, films, slides, tapes, overhead transparencies” and all instructional materials used in catechesis must be theologically accurate, artistically sensitive, and technically competent (*NCD* 265). The *NDC* identifies electronic, print and computer-related media “among the contemporary means of communication” (*NDC*, 69 A, p.286) that should be employed by well-planned catechesis, “so that the message of Jesus Christ can be effectively communicated in the real circumstances and culture of those who seek him” (*NDC*, 69 A, p.287). Support services for the catechist and catechetical leaders will be provided by publishers of catechetical materials (*GDSCM* 82, 87).

### Evaluation Code

- |                          |  |
|--------------------------|--|
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Criteria	Circle One
1. Support materials such as tapes, videos, songbooks, catechist formation resources, storybooks, etc., accompany the textbooks.	3 – 2 – 1 – 0
2. Support services in catechist formation will be provided by the publisher and include:	
- Instruction in the use of all text materials.	3 – 2 – 1 – 0
- Suggestions for concrete experiences of lived faith such group dynamics, field trips, and service opportunities.	3 – 2 – 1 – 0
- Bibliographical references for libraries, media centers, and parish catechetical centers for additional study and formation.	3 – 2 – 1 – 0
3. The publisher offers suggestions for the spiritual development of catechists.	3 – 2 – 1 – 0
4. The publisher provides suggestions for use of various media support for catechesis (electronic, print, computer related).	3 – 2 – 1 – 0

**Further comments on the Additional Resources content:**

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# Religion Textbook Review Worksheet

Materials adapted from:

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Abbreviations used in this worksheet:

<i>CCC</i>	<i>Catechism of the Catholic Church</i> . Libreria Editrice Vaticana (Rome, 1994).
<i>CT</i>	<i>Catechesi Tradendae</i> (On Catechesis in Our Time). Apostolic Exhortation of Pape John Paul II (Rome, 1979).
<i>GCD</i>	<i>General Catechetical Directory</i> . Sacred Congregation of the Clergy (Rome, 1997).
<i>GDC</i>	<i>General Directory for Catechesis</i> . Sacred Congregation for the Clergy (Rome, 1997).
<i>GDSCM</i>	<i>Guidelines for Doctrinally Sound Catechetical Materials</i> . United States Catholic Conference (Washington, D.C., 1990)
<i>NCD</i>	<i>Sharing the Light of Faith: National Catechetical Directory for Catholics of the United States</i> . Department of Educations, United States Catholic Conference (Washington, D.C., 1979).
<i>NDC</i>	<i>National Directory for Catechesis</i> . Department of Education, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (Washington, D.C., 2005).
<i>RCIA</i>	<i>Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults</i> . United States Catholic Bishops, United States Catholic Conference (Washington, D.C., 1988).