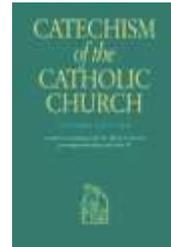


Church Documents

The ABCs of Church Catechetical Documents



Why are Church documents so important to Catholics?

As kids, we didn't like it when someone we considered to be an equal assumed authority over us. We challenged their authority by asking, "Says who?" We wanted to know where this authority was coming from. If indeed they were able to point to another authority (e.g., "Says Mom" or "Says our teacher") we immediately wanted to know when, where, and to whom these words of authority were spoken.

Jesus spoke with authority. Of course, many people resented that. They had assumed that Jesus was their equal. They asked on more than one occasion where Jesus was getting his authority from. In other words, they were asking, "Says who?" Jesus made it very clear where his authority came from: "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me." (Matthew 28:18) This means, of course, that Jesus speaks with the authority of God. Jesus, in turn, gave this authority to his Church when he told Peter that he would build his church upon him and gave him the keys of the kingdom. (Matthew 16:18–19)

To be entrusted with the keys to anything is to be given authority. So, when Christians preach the Gospel with authority, people, in essence, ask, "Says who?" They want to know where our authority comes from. Our answer, very simply, is: God, from whom all authority comes. Of course, the next question that follows is, "where, when, and to whom did God say that?" Protestants and Catholics answer this question differently. For Protestants, the answer is, "in the Bible." Having separated from the Roman Catholic Church in the 16th century and distrusting of church hierarchy, Protestantism claimed that God's revelation is found only in Scripture. For Catholics, the source of authority – the source of God's revelation – is Scripture AND Tradition.

Throughout the ages, the bishops, the successors of the apostles, have passed on the Word of God with the guidance of the Holy Spirit. The Word of God takes the form of both the written word (Scripture) and of a living Tradition. Both, however, have as their source, Jesus Christ. In other words, Catholics know that Scripture alone is not enough. We also need (and have) authoritative interpretation and teaching. For Catholics, Scripture and Tradition are inseparable, forming one "sacred deposit of the Word of God." (Catechism of the Catholic Church 97)

Tradition, in this context, is not just the act of doing something a certain way because "that's how it's always been done." Tradition is the faithful handing on of the teaching of the Apostles under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. This responsibility for a faithful handing on of the teaching of the Apostles belongs to the Magisterium – the teaching office of the Church.

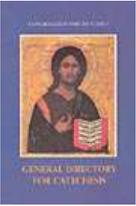
-from A Well-Built Faith by Joe Paprocki, DMin

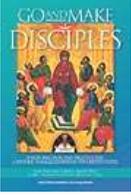
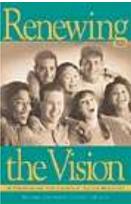
Type of Document	Description
Motu Proprio	A document issued Motu Proprio is from the Pope on his own initiative, and not in response to a request or at the initiative of others. e.g. <i>Porta Fidei</i> (proclaiming a Year of Faith)
Apostolic Constitution	Highest level of decree issued by the Pope. e.g. <i>Dei Verbum</i> (1965)- Paul VI's Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation.
Encyclical	A circular or general letter expressing the mind of the Pope, generally on matters of faith and morals. e.g. <i>Deus Caritas Est</i> (2005) – Benedict XVI's first encyclical, on Christian love.
Apostolic Letter	Letters of less solemn authority than an encyclical, they may be written on a doctrinal matter (e.g. Pope John Paul II's Letter <i>On the Beginning of the Third Millennium</i>). They may also announce a papal act such as declaring a person Venerable (heroic virtue) or declaring a church a Basilica.
Apostolic Exhortation	A category of document similar to an Apostolic Letter to communicate to the Church the conclusions he has reached after consideration of the recommendations of a Synod of Bishops (post synodal). e.g. <i>Verbum Domini</i> , 2010 (followed the Synod of Bishops in 2008 focusing on how Catholic should approach the Bible)
Common Declaration	A joint statement of the Holy Father and another religious leader concerning a common understanding of some teaching. e.g. Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification, 1999
Homily	The homilies of the Pope on the Scripture readings at Mass.
Audience	The opportunity to hear and/or greet the Holy Father is called an audience. The discourses at these Audiences are typically used to develop a theme over a long period. (www.vatican.va)

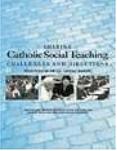
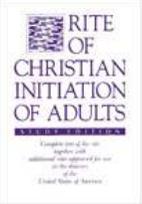
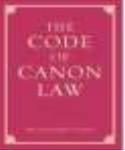
Ecumenical Councils

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. FIRST COUNCIL OF NICAEA (325) 2. FIRST COUNCIL OF CONSTANTINOPLE (381) 3. COUNCIL OF EPHESUS (431) 4. COUNCIL OF CHALCEDON (451) 5. SECOND COUNCIL OF CONSTANTINOPLE (553) 6. THIRD COUNCIL OF CONSTANTINOPLE (680-681) 7. SECOND COUNCIL OF NICAEA (787) 8. FOURTH COUNCIL OF CONSTANTINOPLE (869) 9. FIRST LATERAN COUNCIL (1123) 10. SECOND LATERAN COUNCIL (1139) 11. THIRD LATERAN COUNCIL (1179) | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 12. FOURTH LATERAN COUNCIL (1215) 13. FIRST COUNCIL OF LYONS (1245) 14. SECOND COUNCIL OF LYONS (1274) 15. COUNCIL OF VIENNE (1311-1313) 16. COUNCIL OF CONSTANCE (1414-1418) 17. COUNCIL OF BASLE/FERRARA/FLORENCE (1431-1439) 18. FIFTH LATERAN COUNCIL (1512-1517) 19. COUNCIL OF TRENT (1545-1563) 20. FIRST VATICAN COUNCIL (1869-1870) 21. SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL (1962-1965) |
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	<p>The Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC)</p> <p>A <i>catechism</i> is a written summary of the church’s understanding of God’s word as revealed through Scripture and Tradition. In a sense, a catechism is the <i>what</i> of our beliefs as Catholics. For many centuries, it was customary for children to “learn their catechism.” This was often done using a question-and-answer format known as the <i>Baltimore Catechism</i>. Today, the <i>Catechism of the Catholic Church</i> (1992) is the official source for Catholic teaching, intended as the principle resource for bishops and catechetical ministers.</p> <p>4 “Pillars”: Creed, Sacraments, Morality, Prayer</p> <p>For the average adult Catholic, the bishops of the United States have provided the <i>Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church</i> (2005—a synopsis of the Catholic faith in a question-and-answer format reminiscent of the <i>Baltimore Catechism</i>, but for adults) and the <i>United States Catholic Catechism for Adults</i> (2006—an adaptation of the CCC with stories, teachings, sidebars</p> <div style="text-align: center; margin-top: 10px;">  </div>	<p>“The desire for God is written in the human heart, because man is created by God and for God; and God never ceases to draw man to himself. Only in God will he find the truth and happiness he never stops searching for.” (#27)</p>
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	<p>The General Directory for Catechesis (GDC)</p> <p><i>Catechesis</i> is the process of transmitting the Gospel. To help us understand this process, the church has given us the <i>General Directory for Catechesis</i> (1997) This document helps us to understand the <i>how</i> of catechesis. The GDC provides religious educators, teachers, and catechists with a single point of reference for all aspects of catechetical instruction. (“replaced” the 1971 GCD)</p>	<p>“This comprehensive formation includes more than instruction: it is an <i>apprenticeship</i> of the entire Christian life...” (#67)</p>
	<p>The National Directory for Catechesis (NDC)</p> <p>The NDC (2005) is an adaptation of the GDC for the church in the United States. (“replaced” the 1979 NCD, “Sharing the Light of Faith”)</p>	<p>“Catechesis must make it clear that the person of Jesus Christ offers a realistic alternative to immediate gratification and the satisfaction of personal needs.” (#4C)</p>
	<p>To Teach as Jesus Did</p> <p>Issued in 1972, this was the first pastoral letter of the U.S. bishops devoted to the concern of Catholic education, using the language emerging out of the Second Vatican Council.</p>	<p>“The educational mission of the Church is an integrated ministry embracing three interlocking dimensions: the message revealed by God ('didache') which the Church proclaims; fellowship in the life of the Holy Spirit ('koinonia'); service to the Christian community and the entire human community ('diakonia')." (#14)</p>
	<p>Catechesi Tradendae (On Catechesis in Our Time) – (CT)</p> <p><i>Catechesi Tradendae</i> (1979), Pope John Paul II’s first apostolic exhortation was on catechesis or religious instruction. It followed on the fourth general assembly of the Synod of Bishops held in October, 1977, which Pope John Paul attended before his election. The exhortation emphasizes the “Christocentricity” of all catechesis and the need for lifelong catechesis. This document laid the groundwork for subsequent catechetical documents, especially the GDC.</p>	<p>“The definitive aim of catechesis is to put people not only in touch, but also in communion and intimacy, with Jesus Christ.” (#5)</p>
	<p>Evangelii Nuntiandi (On Evangelization in the Modern World) – (EN)</p> <p>Evangelii Nuntiandi (1975) is an Apostolic Exhortation by Pope Paul VI on the 10th anniversary of the Second Vatican Council focusing on making the Church better fitted for proclaiming the Gospel to the people. It is considered by many to be the “Magna Carta” on Catholic Evangelization.</p>	<p>“Evangelizing is in fact the grace and vocation proper to the Church, her deepest identity. She exists in order to evangelize, that is to say, in order to preach and teach...” (#15)</p>

	<p>Go and Make Disciples (A National Plan and Strategy for Catholic Evangelization in the United States) – (GMD)</p> <p>Renewal of the Catholic Church in the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) brought intense focus on Jesus’ command to “Go and make disciples of all nations” (Matthew 28:19) as a duty of the Church and its members “so that people can believe and be saved,” wrote Pope Paul VI in 1975. In 1992, the U.S. bishops responded with a national plan for Catholic evangelization to help Catholics to live their faith enthusiastically, share it freely, and bring gospel values to everyday life.</p>	<p>“The simplest way to say what evangelization means is to follow Pope Paul VI, whose message <i>Evangelii Nuntiandi (On Evangelization in the Modern World)</i> has inspired so much recent thought and activity in the Church. We can rephrase his words to say that evangelizing means bringing the Good News of Jesus into every human situation and seeking to convert individuals and society by the divine power of the Gospel itself.” (#10)</p>
	<p>Our Hearts Were Burning Within Us (A Pastoral Plan for Adult Faith Formation in the United States) – (OHWB)</p> <p>OHWB (1999) is the basic plan for evangelization in the United States, centered on 3 goals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invite and Enable Ongoing Conversion to Jesus in Holiness of Life. • Promote and Support Active Membership in the Christian Community. • Call and Prepare Adults to Act as Disciples in Mission to the World. 	<p>“We are entering a period of new vitality for the Church, a period in which adult Catholic laity will play a pivotal leadership role in fulfilling the Christian mission of evangelizing and transforming society. For adults to fulfill their roles in this new era of the Church, their faith formation must be lifelong, just as they must continue to learn to keep up in the changing world.” (#29)</p>
	<p>Guidelines for Doctrinally Sound Catechetical Materials (GDSCM)</p> <p>In this 1990 document, the U.S. bishops provide guidelines for producing catechetical materials that are consistent with church teachings.</p>	<p>“Effective catechesis...requires that the Church’s teaching be presented correctly and in its entirety, and it is equally important to present it in ways that are attractive, appealing, and understandable by the individuals and communities to whom it is directed.” (II – Guidelines for Presenting Sound Doctrine)</p>
	<p>Renewing the Vision: A Framework for Catholic Youth Ministry (RV)</p> <p>Issued by the U.S. bishops in 1998, this document provides all who minister to young people with an effective blueprint for building a truly meaningful ministry. This document builds on a 1976 document (A Vision of Youth Ministry) by emphasizing personal discipleship, evangelization, and leadership.</p>	<p>“<i>Renewing the Vision</i> takes up the Holy Father’s challenge by focusing the Church’s ministry with adolescents on three essential goals: (1) empowering young people to live as disciples of Jesus Christ in our world today; (2) drawing young people to responsible participation in the life, mission, and work of the faith community; and (3) fostering the personal and spiritual growth of each young person.”</p>

	<p>Doctrinal Elements of a Curriculum Framework for the Development of Catechetical Materials for Young People of High School Age</p> <p>Issued by the U.S. bishops in 2007, this document spells out what central elements of Catholic teaching and practice ought to be included within each of six core and five possible elective courses over eight semesters of high school religious education.</p>	<p>“As a framework, this document offers guidance to catechetical publishers in the creation of instructional material.” (Introduction)</p>
	<p>Sharing Catholic Social Teaching: Challenges and Directions</p> <p>In this 1998 document, the U.S. bishops identify 7 key themes or principles of Catholic social teaching: life and dignity of the human person; Call to family, community, and participation; Rights and responsibilities; Option for the poor and vulnerable; The dignity of work and the rights of workers; Solidarity; and Care for God’s creation.</p>	<p>“Central to our identity as Catholics is that we are called to be leaven for transforming the world, agents for bringing about a kingdom of love and justice.”</p>
	<p>Vatican II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents</p> <p>The Second Vatican Council, which took place from 1962-1965, produced sixteen documents which are compiled in this book. Of those documents, the following are key for the catechetical ministry:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy (Sacrosanctum concilium)</i>, December 4, 1963 - Basic document for understanding liturgy, a blueprint for ongoing liturgical reform in the Church • <i>Declaration on Christian Education (Gravissimum educationis)</i>, October 28, 1965 - Basic document on Catholic Schools • <i>Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation (Dei verbum)</i>, November 18, 1965 - Basic document on the Catholic interpretation of scripture • <i>Decree on the Apostolate of Lay People (Apostolicam actuositatem)</i>, November 18, 1965 - Basic document on the ministry of lay people in the Church • <i>Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity (Ad gentes divinitus)</i>, December 7, 1965 - Basic document for understanding the scope of the Church's missionary activity 	<p>“The sacred synod also earnestly and especially urges all the Christian faithful, especially Religious, to learn by frequent reading of the divine Scriptures the "excellent knowledge of Jesus Christ" (Phil. 3:8). "For ignorance of the Scriptures is ignorance of Christ."(5) (Dei verbum, #25)</p>
	<p>The Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults (RCIA)</p> <p>In 1988, the restored initiation process was promulgated in the United States in The Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults. This is a liturgical rite marking the deepening conversion of adults being led to baptism – a process that includes catechesis over 4 stages: inquiry (pre-catechumenate); the catechumenate; the period of purification and enlightenment (Lent); and mystagogia.</p>	<p>“The People of God, as represented by the local Church, should understand and show by their concern that the initiation of adults is the responsibility of all the baptized.” (#6)</p>
	<p>The Code of Canon Law</p> <p>Canon Law refers to the laws by which the Church is governed. The Code of Canon Law was revised in 1983. Catechetical leaders refer to the Code when identifying parish policies such as who may prepare for the sacraments, who may serve as a sponsor for Confirmation, and so on. The Code states rights and responsibilities: every Catholic has a right to catechesis and a responsibility to seek catechesis while every parish has a responsibility to provide opportunities for catechesis.</p>	<p>“Since they are called by baptism to lead a life in keeping with the teaching of the gospel, the Christian faithful have the right to a Christian education by which they are to be instructed properly to strive for the maturity of the human person and at the same time to know and live the mystery of salvation.” (217)</p>