

RP Style



*a brief guide for writers, editors
and proofreaders working for*

redemptorist
p u b l i c a t i o n s

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redemptorist
p u b l i c a t i o n s

Alphonsus House Chawton Hampshire GU34 3HQ
Telephone 01420 88222 | Fax 01420 88805
rp@rpbooks.co.uk | www.rpbooks.co.uk

Background

The Redemptorists are a worldwide Catholic congregation of priests and brothers founded by St Alphonsus Liguori in 1732. Alphonsus was a prolific author, with over one hundred books to his credit. Redemptorist Publications, a small Catholic publishing house, was formed in the 1950s, is based in Chawton, Hampshire and is continuing the mission of the Redemptorists in the spirit of their founder.

For over fifty years Redemptorist Publications has earned a distinguished international reputation for its innovative Christian and inspirational material, supplying the Church and its members with weekly leaflets and an array of liturgical and catechetical material. Among the remarkable success stories has been a series of beautifully designed A4-size booklets, the first of which, *Your Baby's Baptism*, has been translated into many languages and sold well over 3 million copies.

Apostolate

Our Apostolate at Redemptorist Publications is to communicate the Good News to everybody in simple, everyday language. Primarily this is through the written word, but increasingly we look at the spoken word, as well as other new media. We aim to educate in the faith, to inspire people on their journey with Christ, to reach those who have been abandoned and to entertain. Every sentence is to be understood by all our readers at a glance. Every article says something about people. There is to be no doubt about its relevance to daily life. At Redemptorist Publications, we produce popular material, which is supportive and inclusive. Our aim is to present the faith in an attractive and approachable way.

Introduction to RP Style

It is important that everything we produce at Redemptorist Publications should be consistent in style. By “style” we mean conforming to a policy for punctuation, grammar, syntax and spelling. The word “style” signifies that there are often no absolute rights and wrongs, but as a company we aim for consistency across our publications. All manuscripts accepted for publication are copyedited and proofread at RP, but it is very helpful if manuscripts have consistent usage before they arrive. The following guidelines are by no means exhaustive, but if this is the least that you do it will be very helpful.

In general, we follow “Oxford style” – the most authoritative and up-to-date system for presenting written work in the English language. No style guide can ever provide for every editorial eventuality, but the majority are dealt with in a number of reference works available from Oxford University Press. The most useful works include:

New Hart's Rules: The Handbook of Style for Writers and Editors
(Oxford: OUP, 2005)

Reference can also usefully be made to:

The New Oxford Dictionary for Writers and Editors
(Oxford: OUP, 2005)

and

The New Oxford Spelling Dictionary
(Oxford: OUP, 2005)

An excellent online resource is

www.oxforddictionaries.com

Editors and proofreaders should consult one of the above for advice when uncertainties arise. This brief document attempts to provide a few guidelines for editorial issues that are specific to writing for and about the Church and our faith in Jesus Christ, which may not appear explicitly in the above publications. It also outlines RP's preferred solution to a number of more general editorial issues and other common pitfalls. It will be useful for anybody working as an editor or proofreader for Redemptorist Publications, or for an author preparing a book for publication.

Particular Features of RP House Style

Quotations and Quotation Marks

Having said we follow Oxford style, we begin with an important difference, and that is the use of quotation marks: RP style prefers the use of “double” quotation marks to ‘single’ quotation marks, with the use of the latter for quotes within a quote.

Additionally, “curly” quotes – also known as “smart” or “publisher” quotes – should be used.

They look like this:

“ ”

and differ from straight quotes which look like this:

" "

(If working in MS Word, you can make sure that you’re using curly quotes by going to **Tools/AutoCorrect options** and clicking on **AutoFormat as you type**. In the window that appears, make sure the box that enables the use of curly quotes is ticked.) If working in MS Office 2010, go to **File/Options/Proofing/AutoCorrect Options**.

Quotation marks should be used as little as possible. As a rule of thumb, a quotation that is likely to run to three lines or more should be offset in the text like this:

Such quotations are known as “displayed quotations”, “block quotations” or “extracts”. They are indented, with no quotation marks at the beginning and end. As this is the case, if there is cause to use quotation marks within a displayed quotation then “double” quotation marks should be used.

Use quotation marks for emphasis only sparingly. Beware, also, of using quotation marks as a way of saying “I don’t mean this literally”. If you find you want to use them in this way, question the word you want to put the quotation marks around. Is there a more precise word you could use?

If single and double quotation marks are used in conjunction, editors should insert a thin space between them.

Prose Style

- Vary the length of your sentences and take care with syntax.
- Use short, rather than long, sentences as the latter can be difficult to understand.
- Use the active voice in preference to the passive voice:

Andrew **threw** the ball

rather than

The ball **was thrown by** Andrew.

- Use plain words in preference to impressive-sounding words:

Specialists who study the bible

rather than

Exegetes

- Use positive language in preference to negative language:

While we know that all is not right in our world today

rather than

Everything is wrong with society

- Avoid Clichés:

This was a blessing in disguise

We will cross that bridge when we come to it

- Avoid exclamation marks, unless what you’re saying is, indeed, an exclamation. Certainly, they should not be used to convey a joke.

Abbreviations and Contractions

Avoid using abbreviations like: e.g., i.e., etc., viz., cf. If you are giving an example, write “for example...” Replace viz. with namely. If you find you want to use i.e. or etc. it may mean you need to rethink the sentence.

A contraction is an abbreviation for a word which omits letters from within the word, but ultimately finishes on the same letter as the word itself. It does not require a full stop.

Examples are:

Fr (for Father) and St (for Saint)

Other abbreviations, which do not finish on the same letter as the original word, **do** take a full stop, to indicate that the word has been cut short. For instance:

Prof. (for Professor)

Ven. (for Venerable)

Abbreviations and contractions we do **not** use include:

Mt., Mk, Lk., Jn, for Matthew, Mark, Luke and John,

or indeed any abbreviation for the books of the Bible.

Dates

When referring to dates please write them out with the date preceding the month, and with no superscript “th” or “st”.

March 21st 2012 would be **incorrect**.

21 March 2012 is **correct**.

Please also note that BC is placed after a date:

4 BC

And AD is used before the date

AD 60

Full stops are not used between the letters. Neither do we use the “CE”/“BCE” system.

Hyphens and En Dashes

There is a difference between a hyphen and an “en” dash, both in appearance and function. A hyphen is short, and draws two words together, for instance in a compound adjective:

RP's products are published in a ready-to-use format.

An “en” dash is longer, with spaces on either side. A single en dash introduces an expansion, explanation or qualification of the foregoing sentence, replacing, as might be, the words “which is” or “which is to say”:

And not only that, but Mary has to come to understand that her son would reign for ever – something that not even King David managed to do.

A pair of “en” dashes enclose a phrase parenthetically.

Dad cleared his throat and attempted a simple – but complete – answer to his son's question.

Em dashes, which are even longer, are to be avoided.

Capitalisation

This is a thorny issue, for which there are few hard-and-fast rules. In moments of uncertainty, favour lower-case letters unless you feel a capital letter would help to clarify what you are talking about. Above all, authors and editors should aim for consistency within a publication.

There is only one “Church” – the worldwide body of people who call themselves “Christian”. If you wish to refer to a specific denomination, then please be explicit. Please do not talk about “all the different Christian Churches”. Prefer to talk about “all the different Christian traditions”.

Please use Church with a capital C to refer to the universal Church founded by Christ, and denominations of this such as the Roman Catholic Church or the Church of England. Also, use a capital C for proper nouns: St Mary's Church, Clapham.

The use of “church” with a small c is appropriate in a generic “we're going to church on Sunday” sense. We also use “church” when the word is used adjectivally, e.g. “church history”, “church leaders”, “the church year”. It also refers to a local church congregation or the building when it's not a proper noun: “the parish church”.

Use lower-case letters when writing personal or possessive pronouns referring to God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Write “Jesus and his disciples...” not “Jesus and His disciples” which is over-fussy. (All modern translations of the Bible use lowercase letters in such instances.)

In other references to Christ, which may occur from time to time, the preferred capitalisation is as follows:

the **W**ord of God
the **S**on of God
God's **S**on
Our Lord
Jesus **C**hrist our **L**ord

(Additionally, never use “Yahweh”; always speak of “the Lord”.)

The **d**evil will always take a lower-case initial, however, as will **h**eaven and **h**ell.

Note also, the following preferred conventions:

the **L**ord's **P**rayer
Good **N**ews (capitalise when it specifically refers to the Gospel message)
holy **s**cripture
the **k**ingdom of **G**od
the **c**ross
the **P**ope
Gospel/the **G**ospels
the **B**ible

Events in the life of Christ such as the **n**ativity, the **r**esurrection or the **c**rucifixion will usually take lower-case letters, unless there's the possibility of confusion. For clarity we'd sometimes use “the **R**esurrection” or, say, “the **I**ncarnation” when referring in effect to the doctrine, but we'd always use lower case for “Jesus' resurrection”, “the crucifixion of Christ” etc.

A capital initial would also be preferred if referring to “the feast of the **N**ativity”, for example.

Most sacraments of the Church take lower-case letters:

baptism, **c**onfirmation, **r**econciliation...

although the **M**ass will always take a capital. The Eucharist takes a capital as a noun. As an adjective, say, eucharistic bread, it will often take a lower-case letter, though “Eucharistic Prayer”, when referring to a part of the liturgy, is thus.

The correct usage for the Redemptorists' post-nominal letters is: C.Ss.R. (Congregatio Sanctissimi Redemptoris).

Some common pitfalls

- “All right” is written as two separate words, not “alright”
- “For ever” is two separate words when it means “for all time”; “Forever” means “continually”
- The word “enormity” means extreme wickedness, and does not mean “enormous”. So, avoid talking about “the enormity of God's love”, for instance.
- RP prefers **-ise** spelling rather than **-ize**, for example evangelise
- The preferred spelling of Judgement and acknowledgement is with the “e”

Sensitivities

It is very important to Redemptorist Publications that the dignity of all people is preserved and their opinions and identity respected. Therefore, all writing should aim to break down stereotypes and not perpetuate them. With this in mind, writers and editors should be careful to avoid overtly masculine language, favouring “humankind” or “humanity” over “mankind” for instance.

One should, however, try to avoid awkward constructions that result from using non-sexist language. So, instead of:

“A parent who looks after *their* child properly...”,

write

“A parent who looks after *his or her* child...”

Alternatively, put the whole thing into the plural:

“Parents who look after their children properly...”

Wherever possible, when referring to “God”, please do not use the masculine pronoun (he or him). It is acceptable when using “the Father” or “the Lord”, but do try to avoid it when it's “God” who is being referred to.

We are also conscious that the use of imagery in language can often inadvertently cause offence:

She was morally blind.

In the sentence above, one is not talking about physical blindness, but the word is borrowed from the description of the disability to describe somebody negatively. The phrase “moral blindness”, albeit unintentionally, implicates those who are blind in a negative judgement; better to use “moral insensitivity”, or “morally numb”, as these describe a loss of awareness to which any of us can fall prey.

We would also like to discourage writers from referring to people in terms of their disability or situation, as it is important to recognise the equality of such people who are more than the sum total of their suffering. So, **please** do not speak of “the homeless”, or “the deaf”. Prefer to speak of “people who are sick” or “those who are housebound”.

Scripture References

The preferred format for referring to chapter and verse is to use a colon to separate the two:

Luke 12:3 Luke, chapter 12, verse three.

A range of verses is indicated by a hyphen:

Luke 12:3-6 Luke, chapter 12, verses 3 to 6 inclusive.

An additional verse/range of verses to be read later on within the same chapter is separated by a full stop and, for clarity, a space:

Luke 12:3-6. 14 Luke, chapter 12, verses 3 to 6 inclusive, and verse 14.

A reference to a later chapter, within the same book, is added after a semi-colon:

Luke 12:3-6. 14; 14:12-15 Luke, chapter 12, verses 3 to 6, verse 14; chapter 14, verses 12 to 15.

However, if a reference is from the middle of one chapter right the way through to somewhere within the following chapter, this is indicated with a spaced en dash:

Luke 12:3 – 14:15 Luke, chapter 12, verse 3 to chapter 14, verse 15.

Scripture references should be avoided in prose unless it is absolutely necessary. A scripture reference in a narrow column width, especially, looks very ugly and

is usually not necessary. If you want to indicate where something is from write something like:

“In his first letter to the Corinthians, St Paul says...”

Scripture Versions

When quoting scripture passages in publications for liturgical use, it is appropriate to use the version used in that liturgy. For the Roman Catholic liturgy, for example, this is *The Jerusalem Bible*. In Common Worship, the liturgy of the Church of England, it is usually the *NRSV*.

Our preferred translation for all other publications is the New Revised Standard Version (Anglicized Edition) ©1989, 1995, published in the UK by various publishers. This is available on line at <http://bible.oremus.org>

If you wish to use another translation in your manuscript, please discuss this with your editor before submission.

Ecumenism

Redemptorist Publications is striving to be faithful to the Church’s call to be ecumenical, recognising that this is not an optional extra but lies at the heart of the Gospel and Jesus’ own prayer to the Father that we “all be one”. Indeed, we believe our ecumenism should lead us to reach out beyond the Christian family and seek to embrace all people.

With this in mind, writers and editors (even in “Catholic” publications) should be careful to avoid exclusively Catholic terminology unless what you’re saying applies only to Catholics. For instance, a sentence such as “As Catholics we are asked to give to people we have never met, and to give of ourselves in a spirit of love” is obviously true of all Christians and so could usefully be reworded to reflect this. Non-complimentary references to other denominations must be avoided.

References and Bibliography

Redemptorist Publications is not an academic publisher. There will, however, be occasions when authors need to quote from published works and it is necessary

for both authors and editors to ensure that suitable acknowledgement is made to those who own the intellectual property. Failure to do so is plagiarism and is illegal. In any case, full bibliographical information will enable a reader to follow an author's argument through from beginning to end and in so doing judge the legitimacy of what he or she is saying. However, please try to avoid footnotes in the middle of sentences. Please also remember that the cues for footnotes should follow terminal punctuation.

The following guidelines of correctly formatted footnotes are based on those found in *New Hart's Rules*:

Single or joint-authored books:

D. McBride C.Ss.R., *Jesus and the Gospels* (Chawton: Redemptorist Publications, 2002), 8-10.

Jim McManus and Stephanie Thornton, *Finding Forgiveness: Personal and Spiritual Perspectives* (Chawton: Redemptorist Publications, 2005), 21-24.

Edited volumes:

Peter Stanford (ed.), *Why I am Still a Catholic: Essays in Faith and Perseverance* (London: Continuum, 2005), 21-27.

Single-author book in more than one volume:

Paul Bradshaw, *Companion to Common Worship*, 2 vols (London: SPCK, 2001), i, 77-78.

An essay or article by one author in a book edited by someone else:

Mel Giedroyc, "Only When I Laugh", in Peter Stanford (ed.), *Why I am Still a Catholic: Essays in Faith and Perseverance* (London: Continuum, 2005), 104-5.

An article in a newspaper or magazine:

Freddy Gray, "Gregorian Chant 'Must be Restored', Orders Vatican", *The Catholic Herald* (16 December 2005), 1.

An article in a journal/periodical:

Paul Wellicome, "Preparing for Liturgy", *Music and Liturgy*, 31/1 (2005), 14-17.

An unpublished thesis or dissertation:

Andrew Lyon, "The 'Rich and Varied' Eucharistic Liturgy of the Church of England and the Use of Music Within it", M.Phil diss. (University of Birmingham, 2004), 68.

A Papal Encyclical:

John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae* [The Gospel of Life], 22.

A Vatican Document:

Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes* [Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World], 3.

From the Catechism:

Catechism of the Catholic Church, 977.

An Internet reference:

Author or editor name, "Title of article used", *Title of complete work* [type of medium], (date created, published, or posted (day, month, year)) <address of electronic source> pagination or online equivalent, date accessed.

Colleen Wheeler, "A Cross on the Moon", *Power to Change Website* [online Christian resource], (n.d.) <<http://www.powertochange.ie/changed/cwheeler.html>>, accessed 6 Nov. 2009.

It is often difficult to find all the information you require when citing online resources. In the above example, there was no mention of when the article was posted, so the convention "n.d." standing for "no date" is used.

As long as your reference is as complete as possible then that is all we can ask for. Some websites, especially more academic ones, have all the citation information at the end of the article. As online documents are potentially transitory resources, it may be worth printing off a copy of what you're referring to so that reference can be made to it at a later date should it disappear off the web.

All these references are given in their full form – the form that you should use for the first citation. Later footnote references within the same chapter (or, if there is a bibliography, within the whole work) can be given in a short form, for example:

McBride, *Gospels*, 34.

There should be no need to use *ibid.*, *op. cit.*, etc. If you do feel that this is necessary please speak to your editor.

Finally, we prefer that authors and editors use footnotes rather than endnotes, as they are more convenient for the reader.

Contact Details

If you have any queries or would like clarification on any point please contact the Editorial Department at Chawton. We are here to help – not just pick up typos!

Please address correspondence to the

Project Editor
Redemptorist Publications
Alphonsus House
Chawton
Hants GU34 3HQ

Telephone
+44 (0) 1420 88222

Fax
+44 (0) 1420 88805

Email
editorial@rpbooks.co.uk

Web
www.rpbooks.co.uk