

**Dei Verbum Ghana Workshop 2005
40th Anniversary of Dei Verbum**

Adoagyiri-Nsawam, 15 – 22 August 2005

Forty-one biblical pastoral ministers met recently at the Divine Word Catholic Conference Centre in Adoagyiri-Nsawam for a one-week workshop. All forty-one participants are graduates of different Dei Verbum Courses organised in Nemi, Italy, and Adoagyiri-Nsawam in the past years.

The participants came from ten dioceses and three religious congregations. The workshop, which is the third to be held for the graduates, since 2001 had as theme: "40 years of Dei Verbum – A time of grace for the Biblical Pastoral Ministry in the Church; fruits and prospects for the future of the Church in Ghana." Rev. Fr. Amewowo of the Ho Diocese gave an enlightening talk on the stages of development of the Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation - Dei Verbum.

In a closing eucharistic celebration, presided over by Most Rev. Joseph Essien, the participants issued a communiqué in which they made proposals to the Department of Pastoral Care of the National Catholic Secretariat concerning the future of the Biblical Pastoral Ministry in Ghana. The participants also resolved to improve networking among themselves as a way of encouraging all graduates of the Dei Verbum Courses to continue their ministry in their respective communities. They also thanked the Divine Word Missionaries (SVD) for organizing the workshop and encouraged them to continue the Dei Verbum programme for the greater development of the Biblical Pastoral Ministry in the Church.

Present at the closing eucharistic celebration were Fr. Moses Adekambi, the Director of BICAM at the SECAM Secretariat, and Fr. Koos Janssen, sma, the Executive Secretary at the Department of Pastoral Care at the National Catholic Secretariat in Ghana.

Following is the Final Statement of the Dei Verbum Ghana-Workshop:

**DEI VERBUM GHANA – WORKSHOP 2005
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COMMUNIQUE

Preamble

We, the Ministers of the Word, formed at the Dei Verbum Courses organised by the Divine Word Missionaries (SVD) in Nemi, Italy and Nsawam, Ghana, have met at the Dei Verbum Workshop held at the Catholic Conference Centre at Adoagyiri – Nsawam, from 15th to 22nd August 2005 to celebrate the 40th Anniversary of the promulgation of the Dei Verbum document in the Church and five (5) years of Dei Verbum Course in Ghana.

During this period, we, the forty-one (41) participants from ten (10) dioceses in Ghana, namely, Accra, Kumasi, Yendi, Sunyani, Koforidua, Damongo, Jasikan, Tamale, Wa and Cape Coast and three (3) institutions, namely, Franciscan Missionaries of Mary, Holy Spirit Sisters and Divine Word Missionaries, have reflected and deliberated on "40 years of Dei Verbum - A time of grace for the Biblical Pastoral Ministry in the Church; Fruits and Prospects for the future of the Church in Ghana."

40-years of Dei Verbum

Through the exposition given by Very Reverend Father Wynnand Amewowo, we have been enlightened on the stages of development of the Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation – Dei Verbum (DV).

From the Tridentine Council (1546) through the First Vatican Council (1870) to the promulgation of Dei Verbum in 1965, we observe that the Church has faithfully defended the Catholic interpretation of Scripture from distortion.

Through related encyclicals like “Providentissimus Deus” (1893), “Divino Afflante Spiritu” (1943) and structures, such as the Pontifical Biblical Commission, the Church has defended the study of Scripture and has strongly recommended that literary genres be developed for the understanding of God’s Word in the cultural perspective of the faithful.

a. A Period of Grace

Forty-years of Dei Verbum has been a time of grace for the Biblical Pastoral Ministry in the Church.

The number forty (40) is of great biblical significance. Indeed forty (40) years of Dei Verbum is a period that has seen the calming down of tension resulting from divergent views held by many, concerning the understanding and interpretation of Scripture.

Dei Verbum has brought new vision and image to the Pontifical Biblical Commission, whose document on “Interpretation of the Bible in the Church” has set out clearly how the faithful ought to understand and interpret Scripture.

Its reward is clearly reflected in a better understanding of Scripture in the diversity of cultures. Today, the Church stands more united in Christ, promoting life in its fullness through the Biblical Pastoral Ministry.

b. Fruits and Prospects

As we celebrate forty (40) years of the existence of Dei Verbum, we observe that

- i. More and more faithful are getting interested in reading and understanding the Word of God.
- ii. There is the desire to study and pray the scriptures.
- iii. Groups and societies share the Word of God at their meetings.
- iv. The involvement of more youth in the Biblical Pastoral Ministry is indicative of a brighter future for the Church.
- v. There are now more publications and reading materials available.
- vi. The Bible is being translated into more local languages and made accessible to all.
- vii. In many Parishes, Biblical Formation and Study groups continue to grow. Biblical Weeks are celebrated, while Bible sharing sessions precede Mass.
- viii. More and more families are sharing the Word of God and appreciating the enthronement of the Bible in their homes.
- ix. An increasing number of Catechists and other lay faithful are involved in biblical formation and are supportive of our priests.
- x. More Lay readers are now being trained.
- xi. Lectio Divina is being practiced.

What all the above means is that

1. The Biblical Pastoral Ministry in the Church is assuming a wider dimension.
2. The faithful are getting more developed in knowledge and understanding of the Word of God. This could forestall the trend where some faithful leave the Church.
3. With the greater confidence of our faithful, there are new possibilities open for effective inter-religious dialogue and ecumenism.
4. More Basic Christian Communities are being established to share the Word of God and promote communal life.
5. The increasing number of Catechists and other lay people formed in the Biblical Pastoral Ministry is helping to ease the pastoral load of our priests.

Challenges

We observe on the other hand, that Dei Verbum is a document that is not well known or understood by the faithful. Yet there are others who do not seem to be very much interested in it. The faithful's appreciation and understanding of Scripture in line with the thinking of the Church is limited. This is one major obstacle to the promotion of the Biblical Pastoral Ministry in the Church. We are quick at reading and trying to understand Scripture in our own way, without thinking through with the Church. To understand Scripture better and live it is to know what the Church teaches about Scripture.

From the reports given by the Biblical Pastoral Ministers at the Workshop, we note with concern the high level of illiteracy which hinders bible reading and sharing in some of our communities.

In certain places numerous differences in language pose language barriers to the delivery of the Word of God.

Some people are not interested in reading Scripture.

Co-operation from some of our priests and religious in promoting the Biblical Pastoral Ministry leaves much to be desired.

Though more biblical translations into our local languages abound, some translations are difficult to comprehend and do not facilitate the proclamation of the Word of God.

Migration of Ministers of the Word, due to unemployment, transfers and accommodation difficulties especially, is a source of worry, as it makes it difficult for them to be of service to their communities.

The Way Forward

Inferring from the various reports given by participants, and the inspiring inputs made by our speaker, we make the following submissions as our way forward in promoting the Biblical Pastoral Ministry;

1. that as we commend our Bishops for setting up the National Biblical Commission, we further recommend that a full-time National Co-ordinator be appointed to facilitate effective networking in the promotion of the Biblical Pastoral Ministry.
2. that our Bishops engage Catholic experts in the translation of the Bible to facilitate easier Bible study and sharing.

3. that the National Biblical Commission streamlines and consolidates Biblical Weeks and Bible correspondence and distance learning programmes to promote Biblical Pastoral Ministry.
4. that our Bishops and the Department of Pastoral Care encourage all priests and religious to work more closely with the lay people involved in the Biblical Pastoral Ministry.
5. that the Dei Verbum Course in Ghana be organised regularly to train and equip as many faithful as possible to sustain the Biblical Pastoral Ministry.
6. that, since funding is a major component in the promotion of Biblical Pastoral Ministry, parishes budget for the programme as a matter of importance.
7. that all the apostles of the Biblical Pastoral Ministry continue to organise more programmes, including leadership formation, Bible Study and sharing and encourage every Catholic family to own, read, pray and enthrone the Bible to further consolidate the Biblical Pastoral Ministry.
8. that Biblical Pastoral Ministers develop methods to bring the Word of God direct to our people who may not be able to read and write.
9. that Biblical Pastoral Ministers make judicious use of resources available and avoid over-elaborated programmes which may incur unnecessary costs.
10. that Ministers of the Word facilitate networking through pastoral visits to other dioceses/parishes and exchange correspondence, information and publications.

Conclusion

We are grateful to God for the gift of life granted us and for being our source of strength, guidance and protection throughout these years of our involvement in the Biblical Pastoral Ministry. We express our deepest gratitude to the Divine Word Missionaries (SVD) of the Ghana Province for organising this spiritually rewarding programme for the faithful.

It is heartening to note the immense role our Bishops are playing in promoting the Biblical Pastoral Ministry in Ghana. It is our prayer that the Lord would strengthen them to do more in this direction.

We express our profound gratitude to our facilitators, without whom we would not have been nourished by the Word. The challenges we meet rather strengthen us. We continue to pray that the Holy Spirit grants us the grace and enthusiasm to forge ahead for the sake of the Kingdom of God.