



Life of the Federation

AFRICA

Tanzania: BICAM Workshop on Bible and Social Issues in Africa

From July 30 to August 3, 2007 the Biblical Centre for Africa and Madagascar (BICAM) organized a Continental Biblical Apostolate Workshop in Dar Es Salaam at the Tanzanian Episcopal Conference (TEC) Secretariat.

Invited to the workshop were the national and regional coordinators for biblical apostolate, among them four archbishops and bishops as well as the contact persons of the Catholic Biblical Federation (CBF) in Africa. Also present were the General Secretary of the CBF, Alexander M. Schweitzer, the Assistant to the General Secretary, Claudio Ettl, and members of the preparatory committee for the Seventh Plenary Assembly of the CBF from Latin America, Asia and Europe.

The theme “Bible and Social Issues in Africa” with the biblical motto: “Where is your brother...?” (Gen 4:9) focused on three major forthcoming events of the Catholic Church within the next two years: the Seventh Plenary Assembly of the CBF in Dar es Salaam in June/July 2008, the Bishops’ Synod in Rome in October 2008 and the Second African Synod in Rome in October 2009.

Three papers were presented to help address the social issues in Africa in the light of the Word of God and prepare the above-mentioned events: “Cain and Abel had a Brother : a Reading of Genesis 4” by Fr. José Mokoto, pss, “Reconciliation in Biblical Perspective: the case of Jacob and Esau (Gen 25-33)”, by Fr. Alfred Agyenta, and “Human Dignity in Biblical Perspective”, by Fr. Henry Terwase Akaabiam.

Besides papers, reports – among others on the questionnaire for BICAM members regarding the *Lineamenta* for the Synod on the Word of God – and discussions in panel and in groups much attention was given to spiritual and liturgical activities. The opening mass was presided over by Cardinal Polycarp Pengo, Archbishop of Dar es Salaam. Each day began with a *lectio divina*, followed by a morning prayer and a mass. Bible-sharing and vespers marked the evening. A Lumko methodological input, the “Amos Programme” (see separate report within this BDV issue), turned out to be a very enriching experience as it carefully treated social issues in the spirit of the Gospel and the Church’s teaching.



At the end of the workshop the participants put together their resolutions, commitments and recommendations. These form a kind of action plan towards the three upcoming Church events, the core of which reads as follows:



On the forthcoming Church events relating to Africa in 2008 and 2009

The three great forthcoming events of the Church being a kairos for our local Churches, we the participants commit ourselves to the following:

- *to consider the time before the Second African Synod (August 2007 to October 2009) years of the Bible, with intensive biblical pastoral ministry in our dioceses, including concrete actions such as: workshops, conferences, Bible-week, Bible-day, enthronement of the Bible, ecumenical Biblical meetings, etc.;*
- *to sensitize the faithful – bishops, priests, religious men and women, laity – about the Seventh Plenary Assembly of the CBF, the Synod on the Word of God in 2008 and the Second African Synod in 2009;*
- *to emphasize the centrality of the Word of God as a common and basic theme of the three events;*
- *to mobilize the people and get them involved in the Biblical Apostolate, with the families as target groups;*
- *to circulate and study the Lineamenta in the countries, dioceses, religious congregations and parishes;*
- *to translate the Lineamenta into local languages;*
- *to encourage Bible-sharing groups and the use of these three Bible-sharing methods: Amos Programme, Look-Listen-Love, and Life-Bible-Notes;*
- *to embark on a wide distribution of the Bible, in liaison with our National Episcopal Conferences, with the slogan: “One Christian, one Bible”.*

The Final Statement of the BICAM workshop can be found in full-length on the CBF homepage www.c-b-f.org.

Report: Moïse Adeniran Adekambi ■



BIBLICAL CENTRE FOR AFRICA AND MADAGASCAR (BICAM)
CENTRE BIBLIQUE POUR L'AFRIQUE ET MADAGASCAR (CEBAM)
CENTRO BÍBLICO PARA ÁFRICA E MADAGASCAR (CEBAM)

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CONTINENTAL BIBLICAL APOSTOLATE WORKSHOP
DAR ES SALAAM, TANZANIA, 30th July to 3rd August 2007

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FINAL STATEMENT

1. The Biblical Centre for Africa and Madagascar (BICAM) organized a workshop in Dar Es Salaam from 30th July to 3rd August, 2007 on the theme *Bible and Social Issues in Africa*.

Present at the meeting was the staff of the Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar (SECAM) Secretariat, the Biblical Centre for Africa and Madagascar, (BICAM), the Catholic Biblical Federation (CBF) Secretariat and of the Preparatory Committee of the 7th Plenary Assembly of the Catholic Biblical Federation. Also present were Bishops, Priests and Laity, National and Regional Biblical Apostolate Coordinators. In all there were (32 participants from 24 countries, including Columbia, Germany and India).

2. The theme of the Workshop was *Bible and Social Issues in Africa* with the Biblical motto: *Where is your Brother...?* (Gen. 4:9). The aim was to address the three (3) great upcoming events in the Church:
 - The 7th CBF Plenary Assembly on *The Word of God, Source of Reconciliation, Justice and Peace*, Dar es Salaam, June 24-July 3, 2008
 - The Synod on *The Word of God in the Life and Mission of the Church*, Rome, October 5-26, 2008
 - The Second 'African Synod', on *The Church in Africa in Service of Reconciliation, Justice and Peace*, Rome, October 4-25, 2009.
3. The different papers presented that helped to address the social issues in Africa today are:
 - The keynote address of the Director of BICAM
 - *Cain et Abel ont eu un frère : Une lecture de Genèse 4* (Cain and Abel had a Brother : a Reading of Genesis 4)

- *Reconciliation in Biblical Perspective: the case of Jacob and Esau (Gen 25-33), and*
 - *Human Dignity in Biblical Perspective.*
4. On the spot experiences in matters concerning Justice and Peace in two SECAM regions (IMBISA – Southern Africa, and CERAO – Francophone West Africa) created an awareness of what is happening in reality.
 5. The methodology of the Amos Programmes was used to initiate the participants on how to address social issues in the light of the Word of God and the Social Teaching of the Church (cf Lineamenta of the 2nd African Synod, n. 56).

RESOLUTION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6. Considerations:

- Considering the pertinence of the topics for Pastoral Approach to Biblical Apostolate
- Considering the mission of the Church that is to work for the establishment of the Kingdom of God among the people
- Considering her role as the voice of the voiceless, the oppressed and the less privileged in the society
- Considering all people as brothers and sisters that raises the question “Where is your brother” (Gen. 4:9) as an important question for our interpersonal relationship,

We the participants of the workshop resolve as follows:

7. On the issue of violence : “Where is your brother?”

That as violence still exist on the African continent and is the cause of divisions, wars, displacement of people etc. we would strive to make the Word of God known, loved and lived.

8. On the issue of Human Dignity

That human dignity originates from the fact that human beings are created in the image and likeness of God, and that God loves all, we therefore commit ourselves to use the Word of God to fight against anything that humiliates and dehumanizes people.

9. On the issue of Justice and Peace

That God’s justice is love and mercy which rehabilitate people. However, we see vindictiveness against our brothers and sisters. Sometimes we are powerless in the face of such atrocities which are against human dignity. Yet, we are called

upon as Church, Small Christian Communities (SCC), Parishes or Dioceses, to take action of justice inspired by the word of God.

As Biblical Pastoral Ministers participants to this workshop, we resolve to lead by example in this action.

10. On the forthcoming Church Events relating to Africa in 2008 and 2009

The three great forthcoming events of the Church being a “kairos” for our Local Churches, we the participants commit ourselves to :

10.1. Consider the time before the Second African Synod (August 2007 – October 2009) years of the Bible, with intensive Biblical Pastoral Ministry in our Dioceses , including concrete actions such as: workshops, conferences, Bible week, Bible Day, Enthronement of the Bible, Ecumenical Biblical meetings, etc.

10.2. Sensitize the faithful – Bishops, Priests, Religious Men and Women, Laity - about the 7th Plenary Assembly of CBF and the Synod on the Word of God in 2008, the Second African Synod in 2009

10.3. To emphasize the centrality of the Word of God as a common and basic theme of the three events

10.4. Mobilize the people and get them involved in the Biblical Apostolate, with the Families as target groups

10.5. Circulate and study the Lineamenta in the countries, Dioceses, Religious Congregations and Parishes

10.6. Translate the Lineamenta into local languages

10.7. Encourage Bible Sharing Groups and the use of these three Bible sharing methods : Amos Progammes, Look-Listen-Love, and Life-Bible-Notes

10.8. Embark on a large distribution of the Bible, in liaison with our National Episcopal Conferences, with the slogan: “One Christian, one Bible”.

RECOMMENDATIONS

11. On the issue of violence: “Where is your brother?”

Since on the African Continent violence still exists and this is the cause of disorders, divisions, wars, displacement of persons etc.

We recommend to the National Coordinators of the Biblical Apostolate with the permission of their Local Ordinaries accompany spiritually the three events of the Church so that the Word of God engenders a culture of peace, love, solidarity among brothers and sisters.

12. On the issue of Human Dignity

Human dignity originates from being created in the image and likeness of God. Unfortunately this dignity is disregarded.

We therefore recommend special attention to the word of God which plays an important prophetic role of revealing to humans their dignity and to each human being that they are a potential source of good and evil, soil of good seeds and darnel.

13. On the issue of Reconciliation, Justice and Peace

As stated above, “The question; “Where is Your Brother” reveals the many unresolved problems and conflicts such as tribalism, indifference, and other social evils in Africa today”.

We therefore recommend, mainly to the Justice and Peace Commissions in Africa, a Biblical Pastoral Ministry of reconciliation based on the Bible so that the prophecy of the prophet Isaiah "For I know their works and their thoughts, and I am coming to gather all nations and tongues; and they shall come and shall see my glory" (66:18) be fulfilled.

14. On the forthcoming Church Events relating to Africa in 2008 and 2009

In the seminaries and formation houses for consecrated persons, we recommend a Proper Biblical Pastoral Ministry to be introduced in the studies' programmes. Accordingly Bible sharing groups should be encouraged and Biblical Pastoral Ministry Groups should be allowed.

CONCLUSION

15. We are thankful to God for this meeting, in Tanzania and for the benefit of the Church Family of God in Africa. Our filial gratitude to His Eminency Polycarp

Cardinal PENGO, Archbishop of Dar es Salaam and President of the Symposium of the Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar (SECAM).

16. Our appreciation goes again, to the CBF Secretariat and to the members of the Preparatory Committee of the 7th Plenary Assembly of the Federation. We were honored by their presence and their contribution in the discussions was appreciated.
17. We are also grateful to the funding agencies, mainly to Church in Need, Missio Aachen and Missio Munich, (members of Africa Task Force;) to SECAM Team, to the Tanzania Episcopal Conference (TEC), its Secretary and Pastoral Department; to our local benefactors, as well as to all of those who contributed in the organization of this meeting. God bless them all.
18. May the Holy Spirit give us the strength and perseverance in implementing the resolutions of the current seminar; may He help us to prepare properly the forthcoming Plenary Assembly of CBF and Synod on the Word of God in 2008, and the Second Synod on Africa in 2009, in the way we have decided.

Dar es Salaam, 3rd August 2007

The Participants of BICAM Continental Workshop