

Catholic Biblical Federation

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Bulletin

*Sei
verbum*

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English Edition

The Catholic Biblical Federation (CBF) is an international fellowship of Catholic organizations involved in biblical-pastoral work. The members foster mutual service among all local churches.

Translation and distribution of Catholic and inter-confessional editions of the Bible in simple language, in cooperation with Bible Societies throughout the world, is part of this service.

Furthermore, it is the intention of the CBF to promote biblical studies, support the production of pedagogical aids for a better understanding of biblical texts, and assist in the formation of ministers of the Word (such as biblical animators, lectors and catechists), suggesting ways to form Bible groups and recommending the use of both mass and group media to facilitate their encounter with the Word.

The Federation also wishes to promote a dialogue with people who believe only in human values, as well as to encourage an encounter with the sacred writings of other religions. Through such encounters, the revealed Word of God can offer a more profound understanding of God and of human life.

The Federation appeals to everyone to add their personal and community support to these great tasks.

+ Alberto Ablondi, Bishop of Livorno
President of the CBF

" Easy access to Sacred Scripture should be provided for
all the Christian faithful"
(Dei Verbum, 22).

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The next formation course in English for leaders in the biblical-pastoral ministry will be held in Nemi (Rome) from 20 August thru 16 December 1993. See page 14 for details.

Editorial

Why do we commemorate an important event after 20, 25, 50, or 100 years, and not after, for example, 11, 28, 42, or 78 years? Are "round figures" really the reason for celebrating such anniversaries? No! Anniversaries have indeed an important function, namely to remind us of the goals of the events being celebrated. The remembrance makes us gratefully evaluate that which has already been achieved, and it creates a new incentive to strive for the goal set forth.

Biblical scholars are preparing to celebrate in 1993 the anniversaries of the encyclicals *Providentissimus Deus* (100 years) and *Divino Afflante Spiritu* (50 years). These two encyclicals have contributed to the "liberation" of the Bible in the Catholic Church and have thrown open the avenues that must be continued today.

These celebrations will be an excellent occasion to recall the importance of the biblical-pastoral ministry in the mission of the Church; therefore, we must not miss out on them! In view of these celebrations, we have published in this issue a reflection on the evolution of exegesis after the encyclical *Divino Afflante Spiritu* (pg. 4-7).

Of course, time still has to pass before one can feast upon the 50th anniversary of the Plenary Assembly of Bogotá; however, now is the time to patiently and determinedly implement the recommendations of the Final Statement. In regards to this, the information that the General Secretariat in Stuttgart has received from the Federation's different regions and subregions are rather encouraging. You will find different echos in this issue, namely: a national seminar in Sri Lanka (pg. 9-10), an appeal for organizing Bible Sunday in France (pg. 14-15), and a reflection of the Biblical Association of St. Paul in Spain (pg. 15). Also, the various news items coming from Latin America (pg. 18-20) and from Northeast Asia (pg. 16-17) show how much the goals set forth in Bogotá preoccupy the work that the different Federation members strive to accomplish in each of their regions.

In April 1994, the Federation will celebrate its 25th anniversary. Why not celebrate this occasion as well by sharing the Federation with others, thereby, extending its services further? This could be, above all, an excellent opportunity to reinforce the biblical-pastoral ministry of our Church.

What do you think? All your suggestions are indeed very welcome to the General Secretariat's office in Stuttgart. Please don't forget this! Thank you.

Marc Sevin

A Way for Exegesis, from the Encyclical *Divino Afflante Spiritu* until Today

The year 1993 will be a double anniversary for Catholic biblical scholars. In 1893, one hundred years ago, Leo XIII published the first pontifical document consecrated to the Bible: the encyclical Providentissimus Deus (The God of all Providence). In 1943, fifty years later, Pope Pius XII opened the door for Catholic exegesis by publishing the encyclical Divino Afflante Spiritu {Inspired by the Divine Spirit (DAS)}.

Because of this anniversary, Pierre-Marie Beaude from the University of Metz, allows us to take stock. He recalls, first of all, the second encyclical's importance, then he points out the paths Catholic exegesis has followed for the past fifty years, and finally he shows what major challenges Bible reading entails today.

The encyclical *Divino Afflante Spiritu*, published in 1943 by Pope Pius XII, was like a milestone that marked the sometimes difficult approach of contemporary exegesis. The publication was preceded by a draft, in letter form, dated August 20, 1941, in Italian, and edited by the Biblical Commission. Signed by Cardinal Tisserant, the purpose of the letter was to condemn the attacks published in an Italian pamphlet that laid blame on critical methods and defended an exclusively symbolic exegesis. We must remember that many critical exegetes at that time had suffered difficulties when they attempted to introduce critical methods into biblical studies. Since 1903, Fr. Lagrange had similar experiences of certain hostile reactions after the publication of his conferences given in Toulouse on "The historical method".

A True Liberation

The encyclical was like a true liberation, and one could say it was like a Magna Charta for biblical studies. The encyclical favored the development of critical, philological, and historical exegesis at a time when certain movements denied them and insisted upon allegorical or spiritual exegesis. The encyclical favored the study of a literal sense: "In discharging this function, interpreters should bear in mind that their direct aim must be to discern and determine what is known as the literal sense of the words of the Bible". (DAS)

The "literal sense" could not be established without recourse to the ancient languages, to philology, and to the different critical disciplines. Thus, the encyclical finally recognized the existence of literary forms in the Bible (especially in the Old Testament). The literal sense cannot be determined without taking into account ways of speaking and recounting, as well as the literary forms common to the biblical writers and to those of the ancient Orient.

The encyclical was like a true liberation, and one could say it was like a Magna Charta for biblical studies.

It is difficult to evaluate exactly the encyclical's influence. Let us say that it had considerable influence. It greatly encouraged exegetes to work on the Bible, and it favored the development of critical work in the fixation of a literal sense which would then lead up to a theological dimension: "By giving an interpretation such as we have described, that is, a primarily theological one, they will effectively silence those who assert that in biblical commentaries they find hardly anything to raise their minds to, and to nourish their souls, and foster their interior life, and therefore maintain that recourse should be had, to a spiritual and so-called mystical interpretation." (DAS 30)

From Philology to Theology

This affirmation is important. Indeed, it testifies to a lively debate at that time and without a doubt it concerns us also today. Don't we often hear around us the reproach directed towards critical exegesis that it offers little help towards the spiritual reception of the Scriptures? The encyclical reminds us that the exegetes' work surpasses the pure domain of philology in order to deploy into the theological dimension of the text. In this direction, as pointed out by the encyclical, the professional exegetes could develop a more theological approach to the Scriptures. This was when the great moments for biblical theology came about. I think of the famous *Vocabulaire de théologie biblique* (Vocabulary of Biblical Theology) published under the directorship of X. Léon-Dufour and of the renewal of the theological studies which between 1950 and 1970 found their regeneration thanks to exegesis and biblical theology.

Protestant exegesis should also be mentioned which had experienced similar problems and questions. What place should be accorded to the purely philological exegesis? In 1928, O. Cullmann acted against the tendency to accept exclusively the philological and historical exegesis as being scientific. He favored the theological exegesis held by the school of Karl Barth; however, in 1955, he declared that the hour had come to defend the philological and historical exegesis against a new generation that judged it very negatively.

Let us come back to the encyclical and recall that even though it provided a momentarily gloomy climate, it opened up many marvelous moments for a critical exegesis which could commence to work in tranquility. The field of scientific work was immense: it went from historical and archaeological knowledge of the ancient Near East to the critical and philological study of the text, to exegesis, properly so called, which reached up to theological dimensions. One can say that the exegesis at that time made great progress. It prodigiously renewed domains which seemingly had become bloodless because they were obliged to a theology which in spite of the Thomistic renewal, did not succeed in getting into contact with contemporary thought. Areas of fundamental theology were renewed by exegetes: for example, the question of the Christian meaning of history and of Sacred Scripture, as well as the questions of the Resurrection, miracles, the fulfillment of prophecies, inspiration, etc. Henceforth, it was no longer possible to delve into theological studies without taking biblical studies seriously.

The Achievements of Historical Exegesis

The critical method applied to Scripture has proved itself right already for a long time. Even if certain individuals contest this, one must try to maintain its valid importance also today. I shall summarize it in this way:

1. The historical-critical approach to Scripture places the faithful in harmony with the culture of his/her time. In contemporary culture, historiography plays a determining role. It is through this that our society recovers a great deal of its relationship with the past. In by-passing the historical-critical approach, one risks reoccurrence of unfortunate events and the loss of foundation. For instance, if one hears it said that the concentration camps and the gas chambers never existed why then should hearsay not be, in a similar way, that Jesus is a product of the Galilean faithfuls' imagination? History must guarantee the truth of our rapport with the past.

2. The historical-critical approach avoids the traps of fundamentalism. By showing evolution and development, by distinguishing the different literary strata, glosses, successive reinterpretations, and traditions, the approach introduces to us the notions of history. It gives consistence

to human input; it recognizes the work of the "human authors" of Scripture and of salvation history. It avoids conceiving revelation as the arrival of the divine world into a world without flesh, without relation, without mediation, and without law.

3. The historical-critical approach allows development of a theology where the salvation of God encounters the history according to the laws of a true incarnation of the Word. It avoids dogmatism and "supra-naturalism", in other words a way of considering that God's word is in competition with human words as if God's word would need to suppress human and historical mediations in order to make itself all the more audible as "divine". In short, a Word of God which comes "direct". It is precisely in such a "supra-naturalistic" system (to be well distinguished from "supernatural"!) where all the integrisms flourish.

Perspectives

The development of new approaches to the Bible is truly not accidental. Diversified approaches and new methods borrowed from sociology, psychology, psychoanalysis, linguistics, etc. all have their place. With these approaches and methods one perceives the importance of the tools and grids which make a text readable. It is not by chance that one sees words like "reading" or "approach" flourish in titles of articles or books.

The Intention of the Author

The success of such words makes one conscious of the danger of a certain historical-critical "fundamentalism". Confident of their historical and critical methods, exegetes have had undoubtedly a tendency to believe they could definitely determine the meaning of a text by applying their critical tools, by going back to square one they could show it like an object, and position it under the eyes of the readers, all independent of the act of reading itself. Consequently and without a doubt, too much use has been made of expressions like "the meaning of the text is..." or also "the author wanted to say...".

One must remember that the encyclical *Divino Afflante Spiritu* has strongly promoted the literal sense and at the same time related it with the author's intention. To relate the literal sense with the intention of the human author was progress to a certain degree. Thereby, one could take into account that this human author was a child of his time; one could take into account the literary genres of the epoch; and in short, one could comprehend that the Word of God had to pass through the mediation of a human author immersed in history. It is due to this concept i.e. "the intention of the author" that one could revitalize texts which were up to that time taken in a literal sense (verbatim), independent from the "literary genre". (One can still read in an apologetical dictionary at the end of the 19th century that Jonah indeed had

been devoured by a fish, though not, in fact, by a whale but a blue shark.) Since the author's intention became apparent from the literary genres linked to a given culture, the study of the literary genres and this culture allowed the finding of an efficient hermeneutic principle: to take into consideration the literary genre for a better understanding of the meaning.

The Work of the Reader

But, by insisting upon the ties between the author's intention and the text's literal sense, did one not risk making the meaning of the text a matter between the author and the words of the text? Therefore, this question must be posed: What place does the reader have in all of this?

Words like "approach" or "reading" were taken as signs that the interest had shifted to the reading, to the work of the reader. One discovers that a reader, immersed in the 20th century, reads the text with the tools, the means, and the ideas of his time. One also discovers that the meaning of the text does not come forth en bloc, once and for all, but that one must multiply the screens and the psychological, sociological, economical, and other such approaches.

Thus, the link was reestablished again between the different poles which allow communication about the sense of Scripture: the relationship between the reader-text-author. Today, the meaning of the Scriptures is no longer considered a mere matter of receiving the message totally fixed and committed to the words of the author. The process of reading is reinstated.

The act of writing, the reading, and the relationships between a text, its author, and its readers are indeed very complex. It is, among other things, the role of hermeneutics to reflect on these issues. Thanks to philosophers, it has been established that the exegetical technique cannot stand alone when it is a question regarding the meaning of Scripture, but that many elements must contribute to tackle this task: historians, semioticians, philosophers, etc.

Semiotics

Let us pass over to semiotics which came forth into our epoch from the gigantic development of the linguistic sciences. If one had to sum up its contribution to the question of the senses (What a venture!), I would underline at least the following three points:

1. Semiotics allows reconsideration of the relationship between the author and the text. The text is not a small truck into which the author loads his merchandise "sense" in order to deliver it to the reader. Neither can the sense be easily detached from the text. It is not like some sort of foam floating on top of the words which makes one indifferent to the text as soon as one has absorbed it. The sense is intimately linked to the text; therefore, semiotics,

independent from the intention of the author, attempts to describe how the text says what it says. For this purpose, it disposes of analytical instruments which allow it to describe the factors that determine the meaning within the text and show how the meaning emerged.

2. The meaning is consequently at the end of the work of reading the text. The meaning is not delivered like a package free of charge to the reader without the reader's own work. Certain semiotics experts like to remind us of the expression "the laborer and his children". There is no "treasure-meaning" hidden in the linings of the words. It is the work of reading itself that is part of the treasure of the meaning.

3. Finally, semiotics allow us to rediscover the interest in the different forms of Scripture reading that has taken place throughout the course of tradition. Semiotics offer a particularly efficient tool for rediscovering how the Scripture text has been read, reread, and reinterpreted by the Fathers and...by others, up to the theologians.

Faithful Readings

As one can see, reading of the Bible has varied, which is all for the better. Different approaches exist side by side and there are not too many mansions in the house of the Father. For a long time, exegesis was interested in the relations of the text "upstream": with the sources before the text, the relation to the author. Today, the exegesis is additionally interested in the relation of the text "downstream": with the contemporary reader as we have seen but also with all the readers who have read Sacred Scripture in the history of interpretation.

One knows likewise (but had it ever been truly forgotten?) that Scriptures come to life in the heart of the reader and also through his/her actions; therefore, it is necessary to talk about Bible reading in the Church, through Bible groups, the liturgy, "lectio divina", the communal and private reading, and meditation. This point still needs further reflection.

Regularly, as historical and critical exegesis developed, voices were raised to defend the idea that the meaning of Scripture is not as a last resort, an affair of critical science but of faith and of the Church. It is not a question, as it had happened at the time of the encyclical *Divino Afflante Spiritu*, to overestimate one idea over another for thus one would end up in some sort of "supra-naturalism". The faithful reader should forget what makes him/her a child of the century in order to begin reading the Scriptures as a believer!

The Spiritual Meaning

It is something totally other to discover how important the use of Scripture is in places where faith lives. Without a doubt, Fr. de Lubac had the most beautiful intuitions of his time on this point. Nourished by the reading of the

Fathers of the Church and sensitive to the four meanings of Scripture, he defended the traditional doctrine of the *spiritual meaning*: "The profound significance of the traditional doctrine about the *spiritual meaning* which outside Catholicism is mostly contested, is that it maintains the idea of progress in the spiritual life within the bosom of the Church." (L'Écriture dans la Tradition, Aubier, Paris, 1966, pg. 111)

In fact, de Lubac poses the following point in question: The last reality regarding the meaning of Scripture escapes exegesis' objective discourses dedicated to studying the text. The *spiritual meaning* is a matter of the person, the spirit, and the soul. The *spiritual meaning* addresses itself to the faithfuls' intelligence and heart who want to have the Word bear fruit in their lives. The *spiritual meaning* embraces aspects which critical exegesis cannot take into account. It cannot be objectified in a critical discourse and not even in a very detailed presentation of the history of salvation. The *spiritual meaning* "can never totally objectify itself. It always embraces and goes beyond what it has captured, as it is also overcome and overwhelmed by what it could not yet catch; the words of the sacred language, says Saint

Gregory, grow with the spirit of those who read." (page 37-38).

The Scriptures grow by growing in the spirit of the readers! What responsibility do we have as readers? With the passing of time, one realizes that the encyclical *Divino Afflante Spiritu* itself did not pay sufficient tribute to favoring this direction. It manifests an evident coolness against the *spiritual meaning*, totally taking with it the desire to promote the critical approach of the literal sense. Even if the *spiritual meaning* is closely connected with the theological dimension, it cannot replace the dimension which the Fathers called the *spiritual* or also the *typological meaning*.

Continue to read the Scripture, for this work is far from being finished! I speak about work in two directions: scientific critical work without which the faithful would never be in harmony with themselves and with their time; the work of faith without which, the critical work would appear futile. The great problem remains to articulate them both.

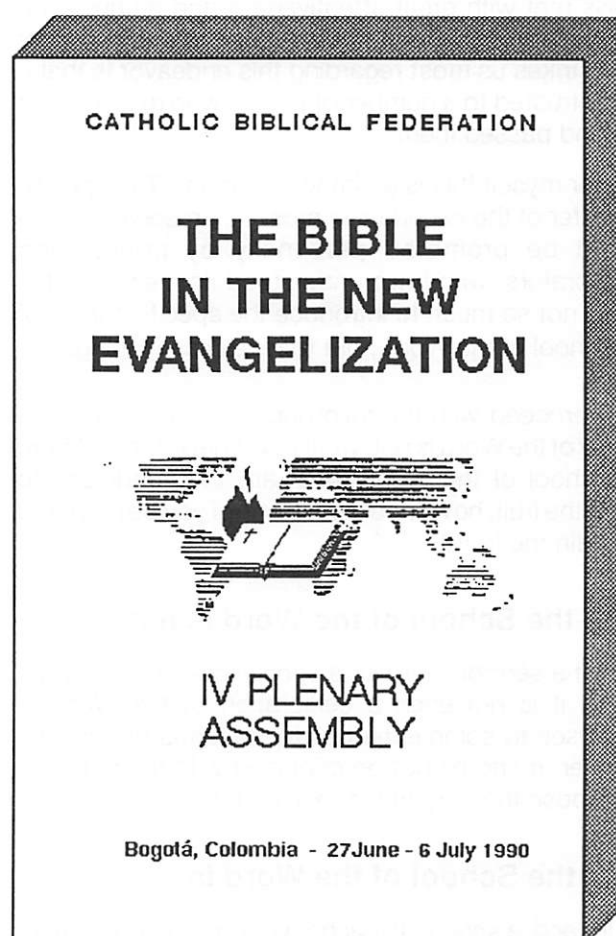
Pierre Marie Beade, University of Metz

Vienna, Malta, Bangalore, and Bogotá, four cities that have hosted the Federation's Plenary Assemblies. Every six years the delegates from the Federation meet to exchange ideas concerning current activities occurring within the different biblical-pastoral ministries of the world and to make decisions regarding common directives, all of which would strengthen and develop the biblical-pastoral ministry's function in the present day situation.

The General Secretariat in Stuttgart, Germany has just published a book about the most recent Plenary Assembly which was held in Bogotá, Colombia during the summer of 1990. The book features the major contributions, a resume of the different reports, a panorama of the Federation's life during the time between the Assemblies in Bangalore (in 1984) and Bogotá (in 1990), the new Constitution of the Federation, the Final Statement of Bogotá, etc.

A copy of the book has been sent to Federation members and Plenary Assembly participants. Requests for additional copies of the book should be forwarded to the following address:

General Secretariat
Mittelstr. 12, P.O. Box 10 52 22
7000 Stuttgart 10 Germany



"School of the Word"

by Cardinal Martini, Archbishop of Milan

In a previous issue, Bulletin Dei Verbum, No. 19, page 12, the Catholic Biblical Federation published an article about the initiation of the "School of the Word" in the cathedral of Milan by Cardinal Martini. We now publish a complementary article that reports Cardinal Martini's recent discussion with organizers of this school about "the true meaning of the School of the Word".

Recently, I gave the Spiritual Exercises to a group of 300 priests in California. One evening we met for an exchange of our views about faith questions, and they asked me a lot about our diocese which led to our discussion about the School of the Word.

I explained how the School of the Word came into existence. I recalled when in 1980 the youth requested help on how to pray with the Bible and this, indeed, led to the initiative to develop the School of the Word first in the cathedral and subsequently across the entire diocese.

Talking about the School of the Word outside of Milan is always met with great attentiveness and enthusiasm. The Californian priests observed, above all, the following: What strikes us most regarding this endeavor is that it was entrusted to a number of priests who made it their own and passed it on.

Also for myself this is an important point: The specific character of the experience must be preserved, and it should be promoted personally by priests and collaborators, who have understood its meaning. My task is not so much to introduce the specific theme of the School of the Word, but to recall its meaning.

I will proceed with the following questions: What the School of the Word is not; what it is; what is the fruit from the School of the Word; what are the conditions to obtain the fruit; how should each one of you be prepared to obtain the fruit?

What the School of the Word is not

It is not a sermon, it is not a special catechesis for the young; it is not even a celebration of the Word. It comprises to some extent all these forms of ministry; however, it should not be confused with them, so we don't lose the core of the experience.

What the School of the Word is

It is, indeed, a *school*. It teaches young people, instructs them to meditate personally the Word of Scripture, and enables them to come into personal contact with the text. Overall, it gives them a taste for this approach.

If the youth, thanks to your support, get the taste for it, they will certainly have the desire to continue discovering all the richness of the sacred text through prayer and meditation.

In this sense, it will take some years, to see the fruit from the School of the Word mature.

The fruit from the School of the Word

There is an *immediate* fruit to be obtained from each encounter. I express it in this way: it is the experience of interior joy because of the richness of the Good News, not because a good explanation has been given, but because each one discerns it for him/herself, sees its relation to life, and feels stimulated to pray.

The specific character of the experience should be promoted by priests and collaborators who have understood its meaning.

It is easy to see the difficulty of the School of the Word. It is not enough to be an excellent interpreter of the text. One must help the listeners to confront the text. An illustration of this may be that of a tandem bicycle: The peddling is done by two. The better one sets the bicycle in motion, and the other one, perhaps, has to be taught how to peddle so that after a certain point he/she can take over. Your task is to take the lead in such a way that each evening the young people will get the taste of the text.

Five necessary conditions to obtain the fruit

- The *first* condition is to have an *atmosphere of silence and recollection*. Our experiences in the past teach us that this is an essential condition without which we obtain hardly anything. It is important to be aware of how the youth enter, how they sit, and how they arrange their seats, in other words to make sure that there are no empty seats between them. Even slight carelessness can create confusion and uneasiness.

(cont. School pg. 13)

Follow-up to the Bogotá Assembly

National Seminar on the Biblical Apostolate in Sri Lanka

The Catholic National Commission for Education, Catechetics, and Biblical Apostolate (CNCECBA) of Sri Lanka organized a national seminar designed for studying, within the different sectors of the pastoral ministry in the ten dioceses of Sri Lanka, the implementation of the recommendations made at the Plenary Assembly of Bogotá. Forty participants representing all ten dioceses of Sri Lanka and several organizations and institutes involved in CNCECBA took part. The theme of the seminar was the same of that of Bogotá "The Bible and the New Evangelization".

Fr. Alex Dassanayake, the national director, presented information about the biblical apostolate in Sri Lanka. Fr. Paul Puthanangady, the former coordinator of the Federation's subregion of Southern Asia, posed several questions: what is biblical apostolate?; theology of the proclamation of the Word; the Bible and the New Evangelization; interpretation in the pastoral situation; biblical spirituality; different forms of the biblical apostolate. Finally, several experts presented models of approach to the Bible.

The fruits of the seminar were gathered, and a brief statement with recommendations and strategy was prepared. Having examined the goals and objectives of the biblical apostolate in Sri Lanka, the participants confessed their failure of being true ministers of the Word in a multi-religious and multi-ethnic land such as Sri Lanka. They were also regretful for the lack of enthusiasm on the part of the Christian communities in promoting the biblical apostolate in their respective dioceses; therefore, they formulated a list of recommendations followed by a methodology:

Recommendations:

01. To make all the pastors aware that the proclamation of the Word within and outside the Christian community is the primary task of a priest.
02. To encourage the priests to be more deeply involved in the life and problems of the people and feel with them in their trials and sufferings so that the proclamation of the Word becomes real Good News to the people.

03. To realize that the main objective of proclamation for all proclaimers of the Word is to build up communities both Christian and humane.

04. To form the clergy and religious' spirituality based on the Bible; to integrate Bible sharing and prayer as part of their seminary and religious training.

05. To train all the faithful to be familiar with the Word of God and to proclaim it with their life witness.

06. To make every effort to form smaller communities where direct contact with the faithful is difficult due to the extent and size of some parishes so they can share the Word in their actual life situation and proclaim it through their lives.

07. To train the faithful, in response to the Word, to play their prophetic role in the midst of oppressive and unjust situations in society, especially where the poor and the weak are discriminated against.

08. To meet the challenge posed by Catholics being drawn to new religious movements and fundamentalistic sects in a more positive way: to pay better pastoral concern for the flock, especially the weak, youth, etc; to proclaim the Word in their homes, both in joy and sorrow; to celebrate the liturgy in a more dynamic and meaningful way; to give ample opportunities for lay leadership, etc.

09. To break down all barriers that divide our communities and society, i.e. race, language, religion, sex, class, party in order for the Word of God to be Good News in Sri Lanka today.

10. To strengthen the National Commission by creating an independent body with personnel and funds to carry out the biblical apostolate in a more effective and meaningful manner.

Methodology:

01. For the National Centre to provide a list of available resourceful persons.

02. To form parish Bible animators, facilitators, and coordinators.

03. To establish appropriate structures, i.e. diocesan commissions, parish Bible study groups, and prayer groups.

04. To give a privileged place to lay people in the ministry of the Word, i.e. prayer group leaders and lectors, etc.

05. To promote and better coordinate Bible study and prayer groups already existing in the dioceses, v.g. Cursillos, Renewal Apostolate.

06. To make the eucharistic and sacramental celebrations and even blessings, not mere rituals but real proclamations of the Word.

07. To form the youth and children in such a way that they share in the ministry of the Word and evangelization. To make suitable material available.

08. To promote better understanding of the Ceylon Bible Society's role and to build up healthy relations as partners in the ministry of the Word including the sharing of finances.

09. To encourage the worthy celebration of Bible Sunday and Bible week.

10. For the National Commission to speedily implement the above recommendations.

Information: Catholic National Center for Education, Catechetics, and Biblical Apostolate, 11 Borella Cross Road, Colombo 8, Sri Lanka

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During the national seminar on the biblical apostolate, Fr. Puthanangady, SDB, former co-ordinator of the Federation for the subregion South Asia, proposed the following reflections on the biblical apostolate:

WHAT IS BIBLICAL APOSTOLATE?

A. BIBLE AS THE WORD

We are dealing here with the Bible, not as the Book, but as the Word.

1. The Differences Between the Book and the Word

Christianity is a religion of the Word and not of the Book. The Word differs from the Book in that the former contains a personal element, while the latter deals with ideas; the former communicates relationships that are personal while the latter conveys notions that enrich the intellect. The Word must be proclaimed to a community; and the Book is to be read privately or in a community. Since the Christian message is meant to build up communities, it is based on the Word which creates and builds up relationships.

2. The Word of God

The Word of God is not a word that God speaks, but what God communicates. Since God communicates himself, the Word of God is God himself; it is his act of communicating with his creatures. God created everything; therefore, he communicated himself, and so we can say that every created reality is the Word of God. Man understands this as the Word of God through the ministry of special individuals who can perceive this Word in

all realities. These are called men of God, prophets, seers, holy men/women, visionaries, etc. When called men of God perceive his Word, they respond. It is their response to God's word, that can also be called the Word of God.

In this sense we may say the biblical Word of God is only a paradigm; but, it is not a mere model. It is the original experience of a community; therefore, it is a normative paradigm. The Word of God is happening even today when we discover his presence and action throughout history and in our life and then respond to him. Through this response, the biblical Word serves as a normative guideline. It occurs in the liturgy through the action of the Spirit who in our concrete situation reminds us of all what Jesus did and said (original experience) and enables us to respond today through our signs and symbols. Here, we have the crucial nexus between the Bible and the Liturgy.

B. BIBLICAL APOSTOLATE

This is not merely providing people with translations of the Bible, although that is very important. We must make the Word of God touch the lives of the people; the book of the Bible must become the book of life in the sense that it conditions our attitudes and actions. We can consider biblical apostolate as the effective proclamation of the Word of God in the world.

1. This entails exercising the ministry of the Word under its three classical forms:

- a. Evangelization
- b. Catechesis
- c. Homily

2. In the process of effecting this we can distinguish 3 stages:

a. Distribution of the Bible

1) Bible translation

- a) Version in vernacular,
- b) Version into audio-visual forms,
- c) Continuous updating of the existing translation,
- d) Inter-confessional translation,
- e) Version for the illiterate

2) Bible instruction

- a) Bible seminars for priests, religious, and lay people
- b) Bible correspondence courses
- c) Formation of bible associations within parishes
- d) Publication of vernacular commentaries.

b. Effective proclamation of the Word

- 1) Train lay people to be lectors, prayer leaders, etc.
- 2) Give the Bible a more prominent place in family prayer.

3) *Biblical catechesis.*4) *Promote the use of the Bible in popular forms of prayer and devotions in the following ways:*

- a) Bible enthronement
- b) Biblical rosaries
- c) Novenas with Bible readings
- d) Bible service during various occasions
- e) Effective liturgical proclamation through homilies

c. Bible in the net-work of all pastoral activities

1) *Liturgy*

The New Lectionary for weekdays and Sundays opened the treasures of the Bible to all people with rich and varied fare. It brought the Bible to the whole people of God overnight. It urgently called for new translations. The sign value of liturgical symbolism like the liturgical language needs the biblical and patristic interpretation, because they are partly derived from the history of salvation. Thus, the initiation of people to the liturgy meant, among others things, initiation to the Bible.

Liturgy becomes a community celebration of a people; hence, the community becomes also the normal milieu of proclamation and interpretation. Today all people clamor and yearn for experiential celebrations of the liturgy. Experience calls for an awareness and this awareness is also given by the biblical Word. Furthermore, liturgy as a proclamation is also a prophetic interpretation of our life in the light of God's Word. The care of this interpretation and articulation is the homily. Improvement of the homily is an important requisite for liturgical renewal. The biblical content of chants has also improved. Now the special translation of the psalms and music for liturgical purposes is felt more and more. The basic structure of Christian prayer is propagated as a model for all Christian prayer: reading, interiorization and response (lectio, meditation, oratio). The celebration of the Word takes place frequently. The importance of silence and interiorization are highlighted through experience of and under the impact of Indian spirituality, especially dhanya and yoga, bhajan and name prayer.

2) *Faith formation and Training Program:*

Bible becomes an essential part in the training programs organized for various sections of the Church; bishops, priests, and religious laity and catechists. Other seminars are also permeated by the biblical basis of lectures, biblical prayer, Bible celebrations, and meditations.

3) *Catechetics:*

In the composition of New Catechisms, the human approach or existential and experimental approach is followed. The Word of God in the Bible is not something abstract, but a faith experience that enlightens and interprets our human experience today giving meaning to the present and orientation to the

future. Collaboration between catechetical experts and scripture scholars becomes indispensable, possible, and normal in such context.

4) *Evangelization*

In a country like ours, one of the so-called mission countries, distribution of the Bible serves as a means of evangelization especially on popular feast days and in pilgrimage centers. But, the Kerygma itself should be relevant to the basic human aspirations, situations, and problems.

5) *Ecumenism:*

One of the common heritages is the Bible. The Protestants' example and tradition in reading and praying the Bible is an inspiration to other Churches. The Bible's ecumenical significance has been enormous.

6) *Inter-religious Dialogue:*

Evangelization is unthinkable without reference to two major realities of India: first of all the presence of ancient, living world religions and the situation of underdevelopment and dependency, oppression and injustice. The first reality calls for dialogue and the second for liberation, a mission for the Church and a form of evangelization.

Dialogue is sharing and exchanging between two religiously committed persons or groups; hence, it becomes a challenge. A challenge to be met not by apologetics nor by organizations, but by sharing religious experience: the God-experience. One means of sharing Christian experiences is to share the Gospel and the scriptures of various religions. Reflecting and praying on them are regular features of dialogue.

7) *Liberation*

This supposes socio-political analysis of the situation, the reality of an Indian society. After an analysis of the situation or of a person's attitude, a Christian interpretation is called for in the light of God's Word. A theology of justice and liberation is called for. The main source has been the Scriptures, salvation understood as liberation in the history of salvation. Furthermore, people are more willing to accept a liberation theology based on the Bible (e.g. Nagpur Theological Conference) than on any other.

8) *Charismatic Movement:*

Like other countries in the world, India welcomed the Charismatic Movement probably even more so than the others because awareness of the Spirit and interiority are the core of Indian spirituality. The charismatic renewal has contributed to the renewal of the Church and to appreciating, sharing, and preparing God's Word in the Bible; yet, one can have certain reservations. One reason for this is because Bible reading and interpreting have fundamentalistic character. The emotional, sentimental, spontaneous, and personal characteristics of prayer can also

lead to superficiality in Bible study. A correct interpretation of the Bible and serious Bible study should be equally emphasized.

C. BIBLICAL FORMATION IN RELIGIOUS HOUSES

The purpose of this should be to create a community of prophets. The stages of this formation are the following:

1. an awareness of the Christian vocation (Postulancy);
2. a deepening of the Christian vocation (Novitiate);
3. subjecting the Christian vocation as a life of community (Juniorate);
4. living Christian vocation as witnessing. Corresponding to these various stages, the course in Holy Scriptures must be organized in the following manner:

1. Postulancy

A thorough knowledge of Bible History; all the important events in the Bible that present the gradual unfolding of God's plan in history.

2. Novitiate

Salvation history: Go through the Bible history again using Bible aids and show how God acts in the lives of men like Abraham, Moses, Judges, Kings, Prophets, Jews, and early Christians and lead a simple exegesis of the 4 Gospels

3. Juniorate

Simple exegesis of the Acts of the Apostles and some Pauline Epistles.

4. In preparation of final vows

The study of the Deuteronomy, John, Isaiah, Book of Revelation.

D. METHODOLOGY

The Word has been used as a conveyor of ideas, while in reality, it was meant to be a communicator of relationship.

The Word was meant to prove statements more than to change lives; hence, it had an abstract connotation which often became irrelevant to life.

As a consequence, there was more analysis than listening, more reasoning than communication with persons. The Second Vatican Council has somewhat changed the concept of Revelation. From truth it has become an act (DV I). We need to get into this methodology. This requires:

1. A better listening to the Word, keeping in mind that the Word of God does not come to us today in any other form than through the human word.
2. A deeper awareness of the one who speaks: God, through prayer, and man, through involvement. Very often it happens, especially after Vatican II, that we tend

to condemn error using our intellectual tools while the people around us do not communicate only with the intellect, but with their whole person.

3. A greater sensitivity towards the persons to whom we speak. This is the method of God. He so loved the world that he spoke. We, too, have to do the same.

4. A relationship between the Bible and the scriptures of other faiths. We need to look at it in a slightly different manner than from how we have looked at it so far.

E. THE OBJECTIVE

The objective is only one, "...so that they may have life and have it to the full" (Jn 10,10). Now human life is differentiated from the rest in that it is an active relationship. The purpose of the Word of God is to build up community. Keeping this view, we must proclaim the Word so that we may enter into deeper communion with them. In this context, evangelization can and ought to take different forms especially in Asia, where the God-experience is claimed as well as proven by so many groups. An authentic dialogue would be an excellent form of evangelization. Our Churches are not yet ready for this; however, this must be a priority. In this process of dialogue we meet persons on an experimental level. The consequence of this encounter will be a change in each person. The truth has to emerge from this. I do not think that the dogmatic approach can help the evangelization of Asia.

Such an authentic dialogue approach will automatically lead us to inculturation. This is the practical consequence of dialogue, of sharing life. We must begin inculturation not so much with a dogmatic and juridical concern as with a genuine Christian concern of sharing and of being authentic. Naturally, the doctrine and the law should be there to safeguard us from error. Seen in this perspective, inculturation becomes an absolute necessity in the process of fulfilling our ministry.

The Word has to recreate the world; hence, it is necessary to question the unjust structures of society. It is here that the life of witness becomes a real martyrdom. Perhaps we have not done it sufficiently. We have left the structural injustice of our society untouched. The prophetic role of the Word should become viable here. We have very few Christian prophets in Asia because ours has been a Church that began as an institution. We have identified ourselves with the institution and the people around us as part of this institution. This misunderstanding has to be removed before we can become Christian witnesses.

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(School cont.)

- The *second* condition is a certain *sobriety of speech*. (The person who explains the text should not talk too long, in my opinion, no longer than 20-25 minutes). Together with the sobriety of speech, a sobriety of symbols and images is called for. For example wind and fire are sober and evoking symbols; however, it is not just a matter of the wind with all its applications and the fire with all its significance, but rather, of the fire moved by the wind devouring ever more. The singularity of the symbols is very important to prevent one from becoming distracted; from becoming inattentive like somebody in front of the TV, switching from one program to another instead of concentrating on one.

- The *third* condition is the *clarity of the exposition*. The person who presents the text must follow a simple method that can easily be remembered. Those who approach a biblical text must easily recall the fundamental points previously explained. Certainly, written material may be used but if these written notes are not easy to memorize, people get lost. It is necessary that the preacher has the itinerary memorized even if an outline is used for a guide.

And of course, I suggest to keep the three basic steps of the *lectio divina* always in mind: the reading, the meditation, and the contemplation. These three steps can make memorizing the text easy: the *reading* puts the substantial elements of the text into relief, the *meditation* enables us to look for the central message of the text, and the *contemplation* makes us ask what the relation is to Jesus, the Lord of my life, Son of the Father, and what the relation is to the Father so that I can enter into prayer.

This sequence is very important and easy to take up personally. I should like to add a fourth element: Propose questions for reflection and action, but no more than three to avoid confusion and to enable everyone to remember them or mark them down.

Keep three basic steps of the lectio divina always in mind: the reading, the meditation, and the contemplation.

- The *fourth* condition is a *participatory mode of presentation*. The text should not be presented as if its meaning were already drawn out, but as something from which the meaning can be drawn through the combined reflections of the preacher and those who listen. Hence, I invite the youth to take part in the questions I ask about the text, getting them involved in the proposed hypothesis. This gets the youth actively involved, avoiding any remaining passiveness.

- The *fifth* condition is decisive: to make *time for complete silence*, the most important time during the encounter. I am aware that this is difficult, that everybody does not have the courage to do it, and that some fear this moment of silence may lead to distraction. When the School of the

Word was held in the cathedral, I always insisted on a quarter of an hour of complete silence without songs, without background music. It is obviously the task of the leader to judge whether this time of silence should be shorter or longer and to prudently interrupt it if necessary. In any case, it should be there, and ideally, it should always be there. In fact, silence is an effective sign that one is there not only to listen, but one is called to personally approach the text.

These are the five conditions which I hold necessary so that there is *truly* a School of the Word. The conditions are indeed objective, comprehensive, and methodological, but nevertheless, very important.

How to prepare oneself to obtain the fruit

The fundamental suggestion is to personally enter into the text, to struggle with it, and to pray it.

The first question is not: What do I say about this page? or What does this page say to me?, but rather, *What does it actually say?*

Prescinding from the task of explaining and proposing it, one has to confront the text as if to meet it for the first time and ask: What does it actually say? What are the relevant elements, the narrative, and explanatory pillars? What is the key message, the core of the text? How does the message relate to the Lord Jesus, to the Father, and to God's plan of salvation?

This is the same as saying, in different words, the reading, the meditation, and the contemplation.

And in this task of personally approaching the text, you may avail yourself with the commentary, not to initially know the commentary's explanation, but to first struggle with the text, take hold of it by the horns, and pin it down.

After having picked up *what the text says*, one can ask, What does it *say to me*? What, in the text's message, strikes me? What suggestion does it give me for prayer?

All this preparation must be made ahead of time, beginning at least one month before the meeting of the School of the Word. Then it will be easier to decide what to say to the listeners.

Conclusion

The suggestions I have made to you may serve as an introduction. To expose the proposals and the hypotheses of departure regarding the themes and their development, I leave to those who did the preparatory work. The proposals are very beautiful and very rich, but take care to not become illusional about them; they do not spare you the personal work you have to do.

At times the risk of a too beautiful proposal is that nothing happens afterwards; nonetheless, we have to make it our own and transform it into reality.

FRANCE

An Appeal for Bible Sunday

The Catholic Biblical Association in France "Evangile et Vie", full member of the Catholic Biblical Federation, has launched an appeal to the parishes and biblical groups to initiate organizing a "Bible Sunday". This appeal provides some practical suggestions.

For the year 1993, the anniversary of two great biblical encyclicals *Providentissimus Deus* (The God of all Providence), dated 1893, by Leo XIII and *Divino Afflante Spiritu* (Inspired by the Divine Spirit), dated 1943, by Pius XII, *Evangile et Vie* proposes to the biblical animators that they take local initiatives to make "Bible Sunday" a reality. Bible Sunday already exists in numerous countries; however, its existence is not well known in France.

1. Why Bible Sunday?

All Sundays in a certain way are "Bible Sundays" since the liturgy proposes to the Christian community to receive nourishment from the table of the Word. Taken in this sense, the celebration of a Bible Sunday can be easily considered superfluous; however, in order to make the communities more sensitive to the importance of their participation at the table of the Lord, why not at least envisage an annual celebration of "Bible Sunday"?

Celebrating Bible Sunday is not a matter of just adding another "thematic Sunday" to numerous ones already existing (the Day of Peace, the Communications Sunday, Catholic Relief Sunday, etc) particularly since the celebration of the Word is already part of the Sunday liturgy. The Sunday should be a point of reference for Christian communities and for this reason it should be a

Sunday although at times it may become a "Bible Week" or simply a biblical evening. Nonetheless, the link with the Sunday liturgy of the Word must clearly be marked.

2. Objectives.

- To give to the Bible the weight and importance it deserves in the Catholic Church; to help discover or rediscover the importance of the Word **read in the Church** and in different groups of catechesis and movements and the importance of the Word in formation, in spirituality, etc.
- To encourage the faithful to **open the Bible in their homes** either individually, with the family, or among friends. In support of this goal, to furnish them with simple instruments to facilitate Bible reading.
- To inform them about **the already existing biblical groups** and to invite them to participate.
- **To establish new groups** who use the Bible as a basis for their reflection, formation, or prayer
- To allow for **ecumenical encounters** among Christians from different Churches and to discover their traditions and ways of reading the Bible.
- To discover **the experiences of other countries** where Bible reading is vital like in Africa or Latin America.

3. How to proceed in practice?

For France, proposing a single model is not an issue. The following are different suggestions which are to be taken with a grain of salt and to be adapted to each milieu! These examples may provide inspiration to launch this venture of Bible Sunday.

- When possible, attend one or several existing biblical groups and incorporate their motivations and experiences.
- Attend other Christian groups who use the Bible: reflection groups or groups of catechesis, prayer, liturgy, etc. and inquire about what they concretely do with the Bible, how they progress in their knowledge, and why the Word of God is important to them.

(cont. France pg 15)

THE BIBLICAL-PASTORAL CENTER DEI VERBUM IN NEMI (ROME)

The next formation course in English for leaders in the biblical-pastoral ministry will be held in Nemi (Rome) from 20 August thru 16 December 1993.

• • • **Registration deadline is 30 April 1993** • • •

Interested persons may as soon as possible send their requests for registration or inquiries for further information to the following address: Missionari Verbiti

Director of the DEI VERBUM Course

Via dei Laghi 52, I-00040 NEMI (ROMA) Tel: 0039-6-936 83 66

We thank you in advance for passing on this information to leaders in the biblical ministry and to others who may be interested in this course.

(France, cont.)

- Put the "Bible Sunday" into the plural in other words, spread out the celebration over two or three Sundays. This would strengthen certain catechesis based on the Biblical readings (for example Advent or Lent) and also deepen the reflection.

- Organize the liturgical features of the Sunday(s) in such a way that they underline the liturgy of the Word. For example in the following arrangement:

- Procession of the enthronement of the Bible;
- Highlight the Sunday readings (for example: distribute reproduced texts so that everyone can easily follow, perhaps emphasize some important words or the structure of a particular text);
- An appropriate homily that dwells upon the experience of listening to the Word: how the preacher receives the Word, and how he/she prepares the homily;
- A short time spent sharing in small groups perhaps ten minutes (which will eventually substitute the homily) starting with one or two simple questions about the Gospel text.

- Supplement Bible Sunday with a biblical exhibit. The exhibit can be in the following forms: an already constituted "fixed" exhibit, a reception every day of the week, and/or a simple series of banners presented in the Church at the end of the mass.

- Present books of introduction, reviews, and brochures (for sale on the spot or available in a nearby library). Display and explain traditional biblical instruments such as different translations into French (and other languages according to the population), a synopsis of the Gospels, the New Testament in Greek, a Hebrew Bible, a Concordance, a theological-biblical dictionary, a Bible atlas, and even biblical magazines available from *Évangile et Vie*: the *Dossiers de la Bible* and the *Cahiers Évangile*!

- To enhance further and explain through panels, banners, or guided tours biblical images displayed in some churches: Statues, stain glass windows, or paintings with biblical themes. Decode traditional motifs: the lamb, the four animals/evangelists, the attributes of biblical personages, etc.

- Have a biblical evening with a lecture, debate and/or celebration on this Sunday or a day next to it. Give a slide presentation showing a journey to the Holy Land which will likewise furnish a good starting point for such a biblical evening.

- Envisage a fund raising in solidarity with biblical organizations in the Third World Churches to partly finance translations of the Bible in vernacular languages and the production of magazines and of small information booklets especially to help the faithful fend off the aggressiveness of the sects.

The Catholic Biblical Federation supports its members to continue to make every effort to foster and extend this movement among Catholics. Bible Sunday is one of the simple and concrete means to develop and put into practice a truly biblical pastoral ministry.

The Life of the Federation

Europe

Spain: The Final Statement of Bogotá, a Guide to the New Evangelization

The Biblical Association of St. Paul (Asociación Bíblica San Pablo) in Madrid, an associate member of the Federation, invites its members to once again read the Final Statement of Bogotá in order to become better oriented for future tasks. According to the Association's president, Cayetano Muños Abad, the "New Evangelization" to which the Pope invites the entire Church today, must above all begin with a deeper knowledge and love of Sacred Scripture, namely for two reasons:

1. Because the new historical awareness, which is characteristic of the faithful today, creates a more receptive response to the Bible than to the dogmatic and theological positions.

2. Because the Bible offers models to follow which are valid even for today in order to proclaim the Word of God. Indeed, the "New Evangelization" has common features with the first evangelization as recorded in the Acts of the Apostles: the oral proclamation of the Good News and the life-testimony of the apostles; the establishment of new communities and the strengthening of already existing ones; the recording of the message's precise aspects according to each concrete situation in the different communities. "Here first of all", Muños Abad adds, "the Bible scholars are called upon; it should be our first endeavor to return the Bible to the deserving place within the universal Church. Our second endeavor should be to reflect on what biblical responses we can give to the challenges of the New Evangelization. Our third endeavor should be to unceasingly meditate the Word of God so that we find the light that illuminates the renewal process which the whole Church needs."

Further información: Asociación Bíblica San Pablo, Apartado de Correos 15.161, E-28080 Madrid

Community Experience In Valencia

Casa de la Biblia, the Catholic Biblical Association of Spain and full member of the Federation, reported about a very simple Bible experience that occurred in two parishes in Valencia which may be applicable in other parishes.

During each baptism which takes place during the Eucharistic celebration, the Bible is given as a gift to the child being baptized. After the proclamation of the Word of God, the celebrant explains to the faithful attending the service that this Word of God accompanies the baptized child throughout its entire life. The child may use this book to prepare for the first communion, for

confirmation, and in school. The gift of the Word of God is now a constant companion throughout life.

Before the final blessing, the parents step up to the altar next to the lectern where the priest, assisted by the parents, hands over the Bible to the infant. The priest then explains that the Bible given as the child's first book, comes as a gift from him who has sown in the child the seed of faith.

Then the dedication is read that has been entered into the Bible:

To N. N., on the day of baptism

"The study and meditation of the Word of God, contained in this holy book, the assiduous reception of the sacraments of the Church and the performing of good works may make of you a faithful servant of Christ; then you can meet him with a burning lamp when he comes and calls you definitely with your name, and he will give you a share of his Reign forever." -Date, priest's signature/parish seal-

The parish priest of the two communities explains the origin of this practice in the following way: "Some years ago, I organized a Bible week in the parish.... Soon after, I realized that many individuals qualifying for confirmation or couples preparing for marriage did not have their own Bible. Instead of insisting that they buy one, I decided to donate a Bible to them. When the Bible is given at baptism it becomes very personal property of the baptized.... It is important in this context that the faithful understand that the Bible should mean more to them than just a gift or any other religious object...."

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Asia

The Subregion of North-East Asia: Panorama of Biblical-Pastoral Activities

The Catholic Biblical Federation (CBF) subregion, North-East Asia, is comprised of Hong Kong, Japan, Korea, and Taiwan. The subregional coordinator is Ms. Cecilia Chui.

In view of putting into reality the Final Statement of Bogotá, this subregion held its first subregional meeting in Seoul in 1991. (CBF has published the conclusions of this encounter in Bulletin Dei Verbum 22, pg. 10.)

In preparation for this meeting, Ms. Chui visited the Federation members and other biblical organizations in the North-East Asia region. She gathered information from the countries in accordance with the criteria established in Bogotá. The following is a summary of her report:

Formation

Hong Kong

Hong Kong Catholic Biblical Association (HKCBA) collaborates with the Diocesan Liturgical Commission and the Catholic Biblical Institute (CBI) to carry out a formation program called "Walk with Luke". The program was a series of Bible talks, beginning in November 1991 and ending in October 1992, and the goal was to help lay people acquire a deeper knowledge of the third gospel. -In July, the director of the Franciscan Bible School (Studium Biblicum Franciscanum) led a pilgrimage to the

Holy Land as part of the program. - The CBI continues to encourage the lay faithful to take part in diploma and non-diploma courses on the Bible.

Taiwan

Two formation courses were organized based on the "Adult Biblical Interdependent Learning" (ABIL) program. Each course was well attended by representatives from various dioceses.

Japan

The program "Reading the Bible in 100 Weeks" (cf. Bulletin Dei Verbum 21, pg 13-16) continues to be used for formation. - Fukuoka held its first seminar on the use of computer in the biblical ministry. Twenty eight priests, religious, and lay people attended. - Members of the Biblical Commission directed a one-month pilgrimage to Jerusalem and gave Bible lectures. - The Biblical Commission cooperated with Japan Bible Society to hold a Bible campaign in August.

Korea

Various religious congregations provide intensive training for lay people. - In Chonju Diocese, an associate member of the Federation, there is an initial plan to provide training to active lay members and leaders which will enable them to preside Bible discussion groups and lead others to become active members of the prophetic Church.

Structures

Taiwan

A Biblical Commission has been established, and a Bible Center is already functioning in Tapei.

Macao

The Biblical Association of Macao was officially inaugurated on January 11, 1992.

Korea

It was decided at the Bishops' Conference that each diocese should appoint a priest responsible for the biblical-pastoral ministry. The first meeting was held on April 22 and 23, 1992. The initial meeting outlined a schedule for future periodical meetings. - For the Chonju Diocese, the diocesan pastoral administration organizes, supervises, and coordinates the biblical-pastoral ministry. It is foreseen that a special department for the biblical apostolate on the diocesan level will be established.

Biblical Resources and Materials

Hong Kong

The United Chinese Catholic Biblical Association (UCCBA) publishes the "Communio" Bulletin which continues to provide information on various Bible reading, studying, and sharing methods.

The Studium Biblicum Franciscanum has received permission from the Chinese government to print a complete edition of the OT and NT in mainland China. The translation project undertaken by the Biblicum on "Introductory Course to the Holy Bible" is close to completion.

Taiwan

The "Adult Biblical Interdependent Learning" (ABIL) program has been translated into Chinese with assistance from Hong Kong.

Japan

There is a plan to translate and publish solid popular commentaries on the various books of the Bible. - A computer concordance of the Japanese New Interconfessional Bible was published. A computer program on the Bible itself is also available and includes short and simple programs prepared specially for biblical seminars. Seminars will be offered throughout Japan to teach priests, catechists, and religion teachers how to use the computer programs in biblical-pastoral ministry. The distribution of the Interconfessional Japanese Bible reached the 1,000,000 mark (New Testaments, some combined with Psalms, and complete Bibles).

Korea

After completing the translation of the New Testament, a translation committee which consists of two priests are now working full time under the direction of the Biblical Commission to complete the translation of the Greek and Hebrew parts of the Old Testament.

Bible and Family

Japan

In November 1991, the Biblical Commission together with the Tokyo Diocese and the Sophia University, held a Bible Week on "Evangelizing the Family". Posters and pamphlets were produced to publicize the event, and a series of lectures on the Bible were given.

Other Activities on the Subregional Level

Hong Kong

In December 1991, the Catholic Biblical Association held its annual general meeting which initiated a Bible Month Program. Activities included a Bible quiz, a talk on the encyclical "Centesimus Annus", prayer meetings in memory to victims of the flood that occurred in mainland China, and a visit to the Hong Kong Bible Society. - During a three day period, lectures were conducted on "Global perspective of the biblical-pastoral ministry" and Bible sharing for catechists. - In April, 1992, the director and two collaborators from the John Paul I Biblical Center in the Philippines were invited to give a two week Bible Facilitators Seminar combined with formation training for core team members of the Hong Kong Philipino Catholic Biblical Association. Total attendance was around 80 people.

The United Chinese Catholic Biblical Association (UCCBA) is preparing the Third Chinese Workshop with the theme "Bible and Formation of Laity" scheduled to be November 20-26, 1992 in Singapore. Among the topics to be covered are the following: (a) Bible and formation of laity; (b) how to use the Bible as a guide for the spirituality of lay people? (c) how can lay people strengthen biblical spirituality in parish work? (d) how can lay people strengthen biblical spirituality in small communities? (e) how can they increase the spreading of the Word of God?. The Chinese Workshop will attract

representatives from Singapore, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Macao, USA, Canada, Australia, and South Africa.

Taiwan

The Federation of Biblical Associations of Taiwan continues to work closely with the Episcopal Conference to promote the biblical-pastoral ministry on the national level.

Japan

The North-East Asia subregional coordinator met with the Federation representative Fr. Shinichi Suzuki. They discussed the possibilities of furthering the biblical-pastoral ministry and the feasibility of holding the Second Northeast Asia Subregional Meeting in Japan in 1994. - At the Bishops' Conference, Bishop Joseph Hiasajiro Matsunaga of FuKuoka was nominated to be president of the Biblical Commission of Japan. - The bulletin Bible Committee News publishes information on the biblical-pastoral ministry and helps coordinate the ministry throughout the 16 dioceses of Japan.

Korea

Three religious communities, namely the Sisters of Charity, the Daughters of St. Paul, and the Sisters of St. Paul of Chartres have applied for Federation membership. Bishop Vincent Ri, chairman of the Biblical Commission, endorsed their application and the Federation's Executive Committee favorably accepted it.

Observations of the Subregional Coordinator

The first subregional meeting in Seoul marked a good beginning for the Federation members to get to know each other and to collectively plan the promotion of the biblical-pastoral ministry on both the national and subregional levels. The sharing of achievements and difficulties, experiences and insights, and biblical resources were helpful aspects in the meeting. The second meeting is conceived to be held in July 1994.

Because the majority group at the meeting was lay people (24) and because the Church in Korea was founded by lay people, the subtitle of the program "Bible and Laity" was particularly appropriate.

The meeting in Seoul helped strengthen the existing structures of the subregional team which is comprised of the coordinator and one liaison person from Taiwan, Japan, and Korea. The following priorities which are recommendations from Final Statement of Bogotá are main concerns of the subregion: (a) structures on local/national and subregional levels; (b) formation of leaders/laity and small communities; (c) provision/sharing of biblical materials and resources.

The analysis of the members' strengths and weaknesses revealed the urgency to collaborate so that the subregion's members gain a better realization of the biblical-pastoral projects in different contexts. The subregional coordinator continues to search for new ways in which the subregional structures can offer more support to the member organizations in each ministry.

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Latin America

The Fifth Centennial of the Evangelization

In October 1992, the bishops of Latin America hold the 4th General Assembly and commemorate the fifth centennial of the evangelization of that continent in Santo Domingo. Numerous contributions came from all sectors of the Church in Latin America in support of this reflection which necessarily will take up the following three themes: The interpretation of the past and the role of the Church therein; the analysis of the continent's present day problems and the proposed solutions; and theological reflections and avenues for future evangelization. Although the tensions between and tendencies of the different sectors are inevitable in the Church, it is quite obvious that one hopes to receive from the 4th Assembly new impulses for the future placing emphasis on the commitment of the Church in Latin America.

The Catholic Biblical Federation contributed in different ways to the preparation of the fifth centennial. The Latin America subregional coordinating office in Bogotá sent a letter to all the Latin American bishops signed by Bishop Ablondi, president of the Federation, Bishop Mario de Gasparin, member of the Federation's executive committee, and Fr. Ludger Feldkämper, General Secretary which offered the Federation's collaboration to elaborate the working papers. The declarations of the First and Second Latin America Biblical-Pastoral Workshops and the Final Statement of the Fourth Plenary Assembly in Bogotá were also enclosed in this letter. In response, the Secretary General of the Episcopal Council of Latin America (CELAM) informed the subregional coordinator that offered contributions would be taken into account when the working papers are written. Also on behalf of the subregional office, Bishop Mario de Gasparin addressed a letter to the Cardinal of Santo Domingo soliciting the representation of Latin America as a subregion of the Federation at the Bishop's meeting in Santo Domingo. Additionally, an entire issue of the subregional office's review *La Palabra Hoy* was devoted to the theme of the fifth centennial. The issue included three in-depth articles on the biblical-pastoral ministry as it was treated in the previous General Assemblies of the Latin American Bishops and in the preparatory documents for the assembly in Santo Domingo.

Brazil: The Annual Meeting of the Biblical-Pastoral Team

The annual meeting of the biblical-pastoral team (Serviço de Animação Bíblica, SAB,) and the Linea 3 (Acción y Animação Misionera, Missionary Action and Animation) of the National Bishops' Conference of Brazil (CNBB) took place from April 30 to May 3, 1992 in Belo Horizonte. Sister Rosana Pulga, directress of SAB, presented the report on the situation of the biblical-pastoral ministry. The participants focused their attention on three points:

1. The evaluation of Bible Month 1991 with the theme "Paul, the worker who proclaims the Gospel". Paul as a model of evangelization and fighter for the Gospel raised

the general interest of the faithful. The material that had been prepared for the theme was put to good use even though it occasionally had to be simplified in order to meet the needs of the not so well prepared communities. The lesson to be learned was that it is not always easy to speak "in the name of the people" and that before working out the themes for future biblical events, more effort should be made to take into account how well prepared the people of the communities are to grasp the presented material.

2. Biblical prophetism which was the dominating point throughout the course of this meeting. Using different biblical texts for direction, the working group reflected upon the meaning of the expression "to be a prophet" in the light of the Bible. The results of this study brought light that the prophet is the one who interprets reality and history from the side of God's plan; with his critical theological conscience, he is the great defender and protector of God's plan; his intimacy with God lets him see the reality more deeply; he is in permanent conflict with himself and with unjust, godless and oppressive projects; he announces the true religion and denounces the false one; he does not create a new religion but actualizes the authentic tradition; he is not tied to structures of power but assumes a political choice and passes on hope.

3. Suffering as the theme for Bible Month 1993 which has the First Letter of Peter as the reference text. Rev. Paulo Augusto Nogueira of the Presbyterian Church was invited to introduce the theme. Among the ensuing suggestions for unfolding the theme were the following: - to demystify ideas of suffering, deeply rooted in the popular religiosity, like: "it's God's will"; "woman is born for suffering" etc; - to define the causes and the effects of suffering; -to habitually make reference to the First Letter of Peter which is usually rejected because of its invitation to surrender and submission: what does this submission signify? - to demand a good preparation of the theme from the side of the animators; - to not fall prey to the ideologization of suffering; - to instruct the faithful how they can face up against this ideologization; - to explain how the theology of suffering implies resignation and resistance; - to reveal the meaning of Christ's attitude and the Christian's attitude before suffering; - to work on a new usage of language: resistance against unjust suffering is necessary to pass on hope to the people who are suffering; -to take into account the communitarian dimension of suffering in view of change; - to develop new concrete forms of solidarity with those who suffer; - to be aware that a new form of suffering manifests itself today with the depossessed; - to underline more strongly the theme of hospitality; - to work on the theme of suffering at the ecumenical level.

In the general evaluation made by the regions, new aspects in community life as well as actual objectives surfaced which are considered the fruits obtained from the "Month of the Bible": the parishes have intensified their mutual relations and their reflections on the Word of God through visible efforts of confronting the existing problems; the participants recommended further pro-

motion of these relations through appropriate means and through more numerous participation in the courses offered several times a year by the Bible Study Centre (Centro Eucuménico de Estudos Bíblicos, CEBI) for the formation of community layleaders.

The participants pointed out the following difficulties of the biblical-pastoral ministry: certain priests and lay ministers showed little interest and support because they lacked orientation; the biblical-pastoral ministry was being divergently interpreted beginning with uncompromising conservative groups and the line of the "Evangelization 2000" down to fundamentalistic groups. The participants of the encounter came from five regions, and everyone made suggestions according to their own social background and respective situation in the local Church.

Further information: Serviço de Animação Bíblica (SAB),
Belo Horizonte, MG, Brazil

Mexico: 25th Anniversary of the Sacred Scripture Institute of Mexico

"What God had revealed for the salvation of all nations ... should be handed on to all generations" (DV 7). This recommendation of the conciliar Constitution *Dei Verbum* inspired Fr. Salvador Carrillo Alday to found the Sacred Scripture Institute {Instituto de Sagrada Escritura (ISE)} of Mexico on December 1, 1967.

In 1992, 25 years since the founding of ISE, Fr. Alday takes stock of the importance of ISE during the past and the present regarding the distribution and knowledge of Sacred Scripture as well as the biblical-pastoral ministry in Mexico. Mexico has advanced in these two domains thanks to the Second Vatican Council. Today the Institute is considered the most efficient organization to promote the new evangelization which was the Pope's invitation to the entire Church of Latin America during the fifth centennial commemoration of Christianity of this continent. Fr Salvador is sure that, "The future of the ISE will be happier than the past because the necessity to evangelize is more urgent today than ever before." As early as 1986, the Pope had already reminded the Federation's executive committee members, "Evangelization is the priority obligation not only of the bishops but also of the priests and deacons, in truth for all the Christians." How can one prepare apt personnel to accomplish this obligation? "Undoubtedly, we must begin", the Pope continued, "instilling in the Christian faithful a respectful love for the Word of God." Although the entire Word of God is not contained in Sacred Scripture, the Bible is nonetheless the primary source to become familiar with the Word of God. The entire Church is fully conscious of this today.

For the ISE, the past 25 years have not been without difficulties. Apart from the inherent difficulties in every new foundation, the ISE had to fend off retarding side effects of a developing attitude towards Sacred Scripture within the Catholic Church. From the supreme magisterium's viewpoint, the encyclicals *Providentissimus Deus* and *Divino Afflante Spiritu*, rati-

fied and amplified by the conciliar Constitution *Dei Verbum*, certainly mark a tremendous progress, but on the other hand they have been laboriously and hesitantly accepted by the majority of the hierarchy and the theologians. Twenty years after the Second Vatican Council, John Paul II pointed out that a large sector of the Church still resists or is indifferent towards these encyclicals. The foundation of a center like the ISE in the 1960's and, mind you, in a country like Mexico which officially professes to be atheistic presupposes a great vision and great courage.

Without doubt, as Fr Salvador recalls, the ISE had to outlive its greatest difficulties in the early 1980's, especially in 1982 which has been considered the "hopeless" year. If it can in fact be considered that the ISE was revived the following year the merit goes to the Eucharistic Sisters of the Blessed Trinity who assumed responsibility of directorship during that time. The ISE founder's sister, Sr. Maria Guadalupe Carillo Alday, belongs to this religious congregation and is also the present day ISE directress. As in the other sectors of the Church, the hidden but efficient work of a woman accomplishes a task assigned by providence.

The ISE need not change its future direction because since its foundation it has been oriented towards intensifying biblical research with the goals of placing the results at the service of evangelization and of boosting the entire Church life. Both are the double finality which characterizes the Catholic Biblical Federation worldwide today. Being one of the first institutes that attempt to put the recommendations of *Dei Verbum* into practice, the ISE has never lost the vision of its double finality. On the one hand, their goal allows for a solid formation in the study of the biblical text, the biblical languages, the biblical history, geography and archaeology, which would also include an excursion to the Holy Land. On the other hand, it favors the direct contact with the Bible by training leaders to establish and guide Bible groups and Bible prayer circles. These groups nourish themselves by reading the Bible on both a communitarian and individual level and using the Bible as a base to practice sharing and prayer. In addition to this, through regular Bible reading, serious Bible study and prayer as recommended by *Dei Verbum*, the ISE has made the Pope's concern as recommended to the Federation its own: "The spreading of the Good News", which, properly speaking, is the biblical apostolate. The future work of the ISE follows a very clear motto: If the Word of God read, studied, and prayed does not change life it is but a cry in the desert.

The program to commemorate the 25 years of the ISE covers the entire year 1992. It begins with an encounter for the ex-alumni, continues with an evaluation of the past, then a biblical retreat for the professors and students with their families, a Bible Week in September and concludes with a commemorative celebration on the 1st of December. With joyful participation, the Catholic Biblical Federation which will also celebrate 25 years of its own activities in April 1994, reports the ISE jubilee and joins those who wish that the ISE has still a more fruitful

future in continuing the task of evangelization in Latin America and throughout the whole world.

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Mexico: Growing Interest of the Mexican Bishops in the Biblical-Pastoral Ministry

During an annual meeting, held February 11-13, 1992, in the headquarters of the Bishops' Conference in Mexico City, the diocesan coordinators sensed a growing interest in the Mexican Bishops in the biblical-pastoral ministry. The meeting was presided over by Bishop Mario de Gasperin, president of the Episcopal Commission of the Biblical-Pastoral Ministry and attended by representatives from all the dioceses. The Mexican bishops recognized that the biblical-pastoral ministry has become more and more the key to all their pastoral activities. The work of the meeting revolved around two main points: the development of the biblical-pastoral ministry on the national level and its contribution to the overall pastoral plan under the country's present day conditions.

Regarding the first point, the following observations were made: the biblical-pastoral ministry enjoys a progressive development in practically all the dioceses; priests and lay ministers are more motivated in the biblical-pastoral ministry; the bishops offer more support; the interest for biblical formation is growing among the clergy as well as among the lay cooperators; the interest to establish biblical-pastoral teams is also increasing; the determination to prepare and implement programs for Bible Month and Bible Week is greater; easily understandable biblical materials should be composed and made available for the faithful.

The second point which was treated in working groups brought to light some novelties which the biblical-pastoral ministry may contribute.

On the social plane: The biblical-pastoral ministry helps to more deeply interiorize the entire pastoral work; it makes us face the fears which people suffer today; it forces us to become aware of the people's anguish before offering them an answer from the Gospel; it affects the people's contact with the Bible so that the meaning is not only intellectual, but so that it illuminates their life and leads them to a commitment with reality; it allows sober objectivity when the question arises of whether or not to implement the demands of Christ.

On the political plane: The biblical-pastoral ministry provides guidelines for the political dimension of a living faith and gives courage to accept the challenges this faith sets forth.

On the ecclesial plane: The biblical-pastoral ministry lights up more clearly the face of God as it appears in the Gospel; it allows the proclamation of the Good News to be in a more appropriate language; it favors an improvement of listening among the pastoral ministers with the faithful; it gives a global dimension to Bible reading; it orientates the inculturation of the Gospel; it demands a better coordination between the other pastoral structures.

To implement these goals, the participants made the following proposals:

- To offer simple courses which reconcile faith, science and reality and provide the faithful with suitable working methods. Such courses should be offered on regional and diocesan levels and should be geared differently to each group: animators, pastoral ministers, and the simple faithful.
- To favor a better communication. The biblical-pastoral ministry should be clearly circumscribed, and the dioceses should be informed about it in writing; intermediary structures should be set up; the Episcopal Commission should be informed about biblical formation courses being offered within the country.
- To design a poster with biblical emphasis and commemorative of the 500 years of evangelization (concrete proposals).
- To publish a bulletin by the Episcopal Commission with the main objective being "to publicize diocesan and regional activities and biblical materials in order to create and intensify the communication network that favors the biblical-pastoral work".
- To offer simple biblical aids at different levels; to adapt already existing publications or compose new materials; for the Episcopal Commission to establish a team for this purpose.
- To promote a Bible Month with the following objectives: possibly a biblical exhibition; enthronization of the Bible in parishes and homes; suggestions for a biblical rosary and Bible celebration in the family; diocesan assemblies to boost the biblical-pastoral ministry and bring it up to date; Bible courses for different groups; distribution of the Bible and biblical materials.

The next diocesan coordinators' meeting will take place in January 1993.

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Peru: A seminar on "The Bible and the New Evangelization"

In August, approximately 20 biblical scholars conducted a biblical-pastoral seminar in Lima under the same theme as the Plenary Assembly of Bogotá, "The Bible and the New Evangelization". Three days of reflection brought forth fruitful results. In addition to this, the first issue of the bulletin on biblical-pastoral ministry in Peru has been published, as well as an appealing booklet about a 5-hour training for lectors; the Commission for Catechesis and Biblical-Pastoral Ministry of the Bishops' Conference of Peru has decided to organize a Month of the Bible for the first time; a Bible Day was celebrated throughout the entire country in September; and furthermore, all 41 dioceses in Peru are involved in preparing for Bible Week.

Further information: Comisión Episcopal de Catequesis y Pastoral Bíblica, Aptdo. 1859, Lima 100, Peru