



Catholic Biblical Federation

Praying the Gospel

Guidelines for spiritual reading and interior prayer

The school of unceasing prayer

From the history of prayerful Scripture reading

Penetrate into the heart of God through the Word of God

A commentary on the Final Document of Hongkong



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Editorial

Dear Readers,

Lectio divina - spiritual reading of the Scriptures - is a concept that the person interested in the Bible encounters everywhere today. It turns up in many publications on the spiritual life and on questions of biblical interpretation, often also in this Bulletin and in the reports of the CBF and, naturally, in monastic literature and history. Is *lectio divina* a question of a fashionable phenomenon, a secret tip for insiders or the rediscovery of an old Christian practice?

Ways of reading the Holy Scriptures in faith and in prayer reach back into the first Christian centuries; Origen was already occupied with the communal reading of the Scriptures and with biblical discussions. Spiritual reading of the Scriptures and interior prayer were pursued above all where the Scriptures were read several times a day: in the monasteries. Here these helps to personal and communal appropriation of the Word of God assumed a special meaning. In *lectio divina* this personal appropriation takes place for example on the different levels of the scriptural senses (cfr. BDV 45). In *ruminatio*, the "chewing over" of a verse, of a passage of the Bible, the Word of God is 'taken into prayer', an attitude of prayer is practiced. *To remain always mindful of God and in the presence of God* - this is, according to John Cassian, the reason for the constant repetition of a prayer formula (Conferences 10,10).

These methods of 'appropriating' the Word of God are not however specialized practices but are of significance for all the faithful who want to draw spiritual nourishment from the Holy Scriptures. *Lectio divina* is being rediscovered and appreciated among broad Christian circles, especially among the laity. The document of the Pontifical Biblical Commission, 'The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church' (1993), emphasizes that the significance of *lectio divina* in its individual and communal aspects should again be relevant (IV,C). The Constitution of the Council *Dei Verbum* invites all those who believe in Christ to a frequent reading of the Scriptures accompanied by prayer (DV 25).

The principal contribution of this issue of the Bulletin 'Praying the Gospel', has as its subject the spiritual reading of the Scriptures that leads to interior prayer. Heinz Schürmann, a well-proven exegete, offers a practical introduction: he places along side the daily gospel readings five short sentences that can be the point of departure for a *lectio divina* or a *ruminatio*.

The reading of the Bible in the context of faith was a chief subject of the Plenary Assembly in Hongkong. In his reflection on the Final Document from Hongkong, Daniel Kosch offers a key to the interpretation of this central document of the CBF and thereby underlines at the same time the significance of spiritual reading of the Scriptures as an essential concern of the Federation.

Under the heading 'From the Federation' the *Bible Pastoral de Maredsous* is presented as a first Pastoral Bible. Pastoral Bibles are being offered meanwhile in different forms of lay-out and in different mediums. Their motive is *easy access to the Holy Scriptures for all* (DV 22). The possibility of addressing distinct groups through a commentary and presentation of the biblical text adapted to them and with the help of all available media resources, was also the chief subject of the yearly meeting of the Latin European Subregion.

Well-grounded exegetical knowledge is indispensable for working and living with the Holy Scriptures. However, the Bible needs to be more than studied and intellectually appreciated; the letter of the Holy Scripture must grow in the believers to become the living Word of God. *Lectio divina* and interior prayer are tried and true helps on this road; they are ancient Christian practices whose rediscovery can bring much fruit for the broad biblical pastoral ministry. I wish that all of us may have this fruitful experience.

Alexander M. Schweitzer

Feature Articles

Praying the Gospel

Guidelines for Scripture reading and reflective prayer with the help of the Jesus prayer

Heinz Schürmann

Spiritual reading (of the Scriptures) and interior prayer with the help of the Jesus-prayer: this is the subject of the latest publication of Heinz Schürmann, which, as the subtitle indicates, takes the daily gospel readings 'into prayer'. (Heinz Schürmann: Ein Jahr der Jesusbegegnung; die Evangelien der liturgischen Leseordnung für Werktage ins Gebet genommen. Ein Werkbuch für Geistliche Schriftlesung und Inneres Gebet. Paderborn 1997). In addition to his many years of scholarly activity as professor for New Testament Exegesis in Erfurt, Schürmann has become spiritual father and director for many through days of recollection, retreats and private spiritual direction. In these 400 pages he has "set down on paper what he often counseled individuals and groups in the last fifty years" (from the Foreword). It is a question not so much of a book of meditations as of a workbook for spiritual reading of the scriptures and for interior prayer. On each page the daily gospel reading is printed according to the liturgical order. For each of these there are added about five short sentences or thoughts suitable for interior prayer, for meditation, for example in the rhythm of breathing. With these five sentences Schürmann makes the daily gospel selection relevant, unlocks its meaning "for me". The situation in personal daily life becomes immediately clear, often directly in everyday language.

It can only be hoped that this workbook will be translated into other languages. It would be an enrichment, not least of all for Biblical pastoral work. On the following pages you will find the instructions for spiritual reading and inner prayer that Schürmann places at the beginning of his book and some selected examples for praying with the gospel readings.

A 'year of encounter with Jesus' will, in the end, be as worthwhile as its 365 days were worthwhile, of which each one promised to be a 'day of encounter with Jesus'. The daily encounter with Jesus is built on three contacts over a day: on the Jesus prayer throughout the day which includes Scripture reading and which gives it life and leads to reflective prayer. We give some indications of how these three exercises work.

The Jesus prayer throughout the day

We want Jesus, the Lord of our lives, always before our eyes and serve him as our 'inner teacher', always in our hearts, and listen to him. The ancient Jesus prayer can help us there.

Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me,

or in shorter form:

Lord Jesus Christ have mercy on me.

The beginnings of this prayer go back to the time of the Church Fathers. The Jesus prayer spread mainly in the Eastern church, but is still widely known in the West.

This prayer is simple and impressive, one can use it *always and everywhere* - on getting up, at home, in the street, on a bus or a train, on the way to work and even at work, in company and in a cinema, on going to sleep and during sleepless nights. 'Lord Jesus Christ have mercy on me.'

Jesus can help everyone through the Jesus prayer - everyone differently according to the way or the level at which level that person is praying. With a great capacity of adaptation it fits into all manner of prayer and makes that prayer effective. Everyone can try it in a personal way.



The experience of centuries teaches that it is easier to achieve quiet, and the prayer penetrates more deeply into the heart, if one prays the first line breathing in and the second line breathing out.

It gives most help to those who are 'poor in spirit' (Mt 5,3) and who live in the spirit of the Beatitudes (Mt 5,2-12). They can easily and without many words pray the *call for mercy*; 'Have mercy on me'. But one can also say this prayer for others - for an unbelieving fellow worker: 'Have mercy on him', for a colleague in need or in sin: 'Have mercy on her'; for family, community and parish: 'Have mercy on us'. Someone may begin with this prayer or return to it from time to time, praying readily and insistently.

After some time, the Holy Spirit says the Jesus prayer in the heart of the person praying. It has then become a prayer of the heart; it needs to become an unceasing prayer

The address of the prayer will become ever more important. Everyone can formulate it according to taste; compare the above long form (from Mount Athos) or the short form (more frequent in Russia) or also simply the address 'Jesus Son of God' or 'good Jesus' (as in the *anima Christi*). The 'name of Jesus' must certainly never be left out, for in this saving name the Lord grants his presence with its special grace. Perhaps after some time, the address to Jesus is sufficient,

maybe even without the prayer for mercy which is already included in the name Jesus. In loving prayer the name of 'Jesus', spoken adoringly and prayerfully, will be sufficient, or even without speaking.

Beginners will in their invocations, seek the face of the Lord on the heavenly throne. After some time, they will prefer to look into their own hearts where the Holy Spirit says the Jesus prayer without many words or maintains Jesus' presence. It has then become a *prayer of the heart*; it needs to become a constant prayer.

The Jesus prayer becomes adoration, a living in the presence of God, which will help to peace and calm. It will teach us to keep Jesus ever 'before our eyes' and to carry him always 'in the heart'. This will certainly not succeed, if we do not hold Jesus 'in the hands'. What does this mean? That we lend him our hands so that they become ever more the hands of Christ who carries out his work through them. This happens when we try to carry out, every hour of the day, unselfishly and in obedient service, the small duties of our position and know ourselves to be in Jesus' service.

Progress in the Jesus prayer is inexorably dependent on this condition: Love for our neighbour must become, in great things, more decisive, and in small things, more sensitive - so true is it that the Jesus prayer will make love of our neighbour more decisive and more sensitive. A famous hymn runs: 'to submit totally to the Lord ... by constantly calling the name of Jesus (promotes) ... peace and reconciliation with all people, the suppression of one's own interests and calm. The Jesus prayer signifies for those who practise it a way towards inner freedom.

In this way our own private sphere and the sphere of our achievements

becomes a sphere for Jesus. We discover that we can no longer have Jesus before our eyes nor carry him in our hearts if we do not lend him our hands in all our work. However, our work will not be done by Jesus' hands, if we do not have him always before our eyes and carry him in our hearts. The one cannot be achieved without the other. Our own space and that of our achievement must become a space to worship Jesus.

Anyone who lives throughout the day with the Jesus prayer, will find time for *spiritual Scripture reading* and for reflective prayer. The Jesus prayer will help us by both exercises, by Scripture reading from the *WORD OF GOD* which is Jesus in person, to recognize and understand the Word of God in Holy Scripture and find in our inner prayer Jesus lovingly entering into conversation with us.

Daily Scripture reading

The Desert Fathers of the ancient church and monks of all times allowed a good deal of time for spiritual Scripture reading (*lectio divina*). Spiritual Scripture reading and reflective prayer have always made up a single entity: Spiritual Scripture reading can only be understood as prayerful Scripture reading.

The *Jesus prayer* in its response can bring spiritual reading and reflective prayer together again. The *WORD OF GOD* in person is Jesus as son of the Father. The name 'Jesus' has in its depth the whole of Scripture in him. In fact therefore we can only understand the Word of God in Scripture as Jesus, the *WORD* of the Father. In this way the Jesus prayer offers itself *hermeneutically* as helper in understanding Scripture. It can help decisively in Scripture reading.

If one takes a text of Holy Scripture into the Jesus prayer, it proves itself a key which can open up the text and

teach us to understand it from within. The Jesus prayer opens a christological understanding of Holy Scripture and with it a very simple approach to the text which rarely needs many explanations in spiritual reading.

The Jesus prayer offers a christological hermeneutic congenial to the text of Scripture. It provides a unique service: For anyone who integrates Holy Scripture into the Jesus prayer, it will quite naturally become the good news, the Gospel. Even where demands are made on us they become an 'easy yoke' (Mt 11, 29), since it is Jesus who has fulfilled the law (Mt 5,17) for us; who are sinners and must pray constantly: 'have mercy on me'.

Progress in the Jesus prayer is inexorably dependent on this condition: Love for our neighbour must become more decisive, and more sensitive

R. Faricy says that the best book for everything that concerns the Lord, including the gift of contemplation, is obviously the Bible (39). 'A way ... to contemplative prayer is to use the Gospel. I can for instance take the Gospel of the day ... I only read a few lines (five, six, ten), and use them not as Scripture study ... but definitely as a way to enter into relation with Jesus ... He can then help me to see what this text means for our relationship. It is a matter of getting to know Jesus and to use the text as a way by which I can go to Jesus ... Perhaps Jesus only wants to make clear to me ... what the text says with regard to our relationship'.

In our 'year of encounter with Jesus', we shall do well to represent Jesus to ourselves daily anew, how he presents himself to us in Holy Scripture. In the *cycle of liturgical readings for weekdays* the Church shows us Jesus in the reading of the Gospels, in a one-year cycle, right through the four Gospels, as a person, in his fate, always acting and speaking anew. - in the festive seasons, enriched by readings from John's Gospel, in the 34 weeks of the Church's year in the cycle of readings according to Mark (weeks 1-9), Matthew (weeks 10-21), and Luke (weeks 22-34), see further details under II.1 and II.3.

The liturgical church year becomes, precisely by proclaiming the Gospel a year of the Lord, as we meet Jesus in many different ways and yet as a whole person. Our suggestion would be that, for practical reasons, we let ourselves be guided during the year of our 'Encounter with Jesus', by the liturgical readings and choose the respective Gospel reading for weekdays as our spiritual Scripture reading ...

Anyone who plans prayertime for the morning, should best prepare it the night before by a short 'spiritual reading'. Taken up into sleep, this reflective prayer can be well prepared. In seminaries and novitiates this preparatory work offers 'points' for the counsellor or novice master, brief guidelines which concentrate the material for the morning meditation on 'points' - generally three. - The following suggestion to make the daily Scripture reading serve as preparation can best replace such 'points'.

For the evening Scripture reading the following method has proved itself. We open the relevant text of the day's Gospel. Beside the text we put a notepad and a pencil (see below).

(1) In a preliminary exercise, fixing our attention on the Lord in a 'prayer

of loving attention' we let his light shine upon us ... 'In the beginning was the Word ... the true light that gives light to everyone'. (John I, 1,9) Fixing our attention on him we may pray the Jesus prayer:

Lord Jesus Christ (Son of God),
have mercy on me
You are the true light;
have mercy on me.
Lord Jesus Christ,
have mercy on me,
You are my true light;
have mercy on me.

We remain in this light until it has become 'the light inside you' (Mt 6,22f) in our hearts. In this light we can see 'the glory of the Lord on the face of Christ' (2Cor 2, 18, 4,6).

(2) After this first prayerful exercise, we *read* slowly the day's Gospel with a great desire to get to know Jesus, to see on his face God's glorious light, to recognize 'THE WORD' of the Father. He who wants, here and now, to speak to us directly, in and through all his deeds and words, through his destiny and his ways of behaviour which the text recounts - which becomes for us, as we look at Him who is 'above' the text about the Lord exalted in the glory of the light and love of God, a light for us and in us, *THE WORD* alive, yearning to speak to us, here and now.

(3) Where Jesus grants us - as our Inner Master - an insight, leaves an impression and perhaps gives us an enlightening knowledge, we will receive a prayerful answer. It is helpful to shape the answer into a prayerful sentence which continues the first line of the Jesus prayer and fills perhaps too the second line with a prayerful thought, including the prayer for mercy. As an example the Gospel of John may be helpful (John, 21, 15-19), (cf. below p. 20f):

Lord Jesus Christ (Son of God), have mercy on me.



Lord, I know, you love me, have mercy on me,
Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me,
Lord you know that I love you, have mercy on me.
Lord Jesus Christ have mercy on me.
Lord, I know, you are love, have mercy on me.

Already after a few evening practices it will be easy (after a few quickly made notes as a first draft) to make a copy of a final version on a second sheet (perhaps to collect in a notebook), perhaps, any time - if it works out like that - with 5 prayer sentences (adoration, intercession or petition).

It is not always necessary to write down the sentences of prayer in the sequence of the Scripture text; it is often more helpful to aim immediately at the centre of the pericope and to organise all prayers from this middle point. It may happen that after some practice it is sufficient for someone to note down 3 instead of 5 prayer sentences for 'reflective prayer' the next morning; in the end perhaps only one. The more meditative prayer is simplified and becomes loving contemplation, the fewer themes are needed from the Word of God. The simple promise of God's salvation is enough for one who prays, God speaking personally to us (see, p. 19).

At the end of our spiritual reading of Scripture with pencil and paper we may ask ourselves which of the 5 Jesus addresses, noted down, has made the deepest impression on my soul? Which one has become the most forceful and the most gripping form. This one can then be included in the Jesus prayer and with it into the night's sleep. Here it will purify the inner soul in its depth and height, and on walking, it will lie peacefully on our lips.

This preliminary exercise with pencil and paper is already an impressive

meditation procedure which saves the reflective prayer of the next morning much preparation and can lead easily and directly to loving contemplation.

Reflective Prayer day by day

To be there for the Lord needs a *definite time* when he can make suggestions to us as he wishes. Perhaps we can keep an early morning hour free for 'reflective prayer'. Place and duration of the prayer time should not be left to chance, dependent either on interior or exterior circumstances. It must be independent of sleepiness, feeling unwell, distractions, darkness. The time for reflective prayer would hardly be fruitful for under a quarter of an hour. Everyone must know his or her capacity, put it to the test, and then stick to the time.

Why is it advisable to practise reflective prayer always in the same place? The loving attention, simply being there before *HIM* and for *HIM* are already prayer, a sacrificial attitude in oneself and so already more than prayer. This being there is being empty for *HIM* and so an attitude of poverty before God, the attitude of a beggar on whom God can bestow gifts and will certainly do so. God's graces cannot always be experienced.

Prayer time will often be as good as the preparation for it was organised. Here are 3 *preparatory exercises*, almost necessary, in one way or another ... (1) I put myself into the presence of the *Trinity*, perhaps asking 'the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with me, - the love of God the Father be with me, - the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with me'.

Then (2) one will have to *direct* all the strength of the soul, in prayer and adoration, *totally to God*. St. Ignatius recommends to those following the Exercises, in his book (EB, No. 46) al-

ways the same preparation: 'to ask God Our Lord for grace so that all my intentions, actions and activities be entirely directed to the service and praise of His Divine Majesty'. Perhaps a simple Glory be to the Father ... through the Son ... in the Holy Spirit' may be helpful.

(3) Teachers of spirituality advise to *recall*, at the beginning of an hour of prayer, what was particularly impressive in the previous prayer time and is still present in the soul. In the new prayer time one should remain with it and not embark on some new material in one's prayer; for 'much knowledge does not satisfy the soul', but 'loving tasting', says an often quoted sentence from St. Ignatius (EB No. 1,2). Otherwise it will be helpful in one's preparation to recall the most important impressions of the evening Scripture reading into the Jesus prayer and stay with it, lovingly, for a while.

The reflective prayer has a sequence (which the 'inner master' can always feel free to change). It is advisable that, at the beginning,

(1) *by reading* we let the text of the day's Gospel speak to us again briefly, or better let *HIM* speak to us who meets us in the text of Scripture as *THE WORD OF GOD*.

(2) *To meditate on the scenery* of the story, or rather thinking over Jesus' words (*meditatio* = meditation) we have already linked to the reading of Scripture, the previous evening. Such meditation builds a bridge between reading and prayer, but as intellectual reflection is not yet real prayer (which is a speaking to God or raising the soul to God).

(3) Seeking 5 prayer sentences in the Scripture reading and hold on to them may be more helpful for reflective prayer than the usually presented 'points of meditation', meant to prepare the opening up of the text. We

quickly recall - since it has already been noted and slept on - what became important and impressive during the evening's meditative reading.

Here, the Holy Spirit has left impressions filled with light or consolation. We should now remain with these ideas in loving prayer as long as the soul finds light or consolation ... Perhaps these impressions which we have formulated as prayer sentences make the soul rise high in its light so that, in an affective prayer a *dialogue* with the Lord becomes possible, from one to the other (*locutio* = speaking with God).

(4) The dialogue becomes simpler ... and is simplified into a loving speaking from one to the other. In the end there remains in the prayer only a single impression so intensely that it engages the soul in a simple gaze (*contemplatio* = loving contemplation). In that case one should always remain lovingly with what is offered, given and granted. Everyone should pray as the inner master teaches: remain faithfully in the reading, in thoughtful meditation, in affective dialogue, in loving contemplation.

Perhaps this should be made clearer. The self only ever lives through the other: Only when someone speaks personally to me, can I say I am myself. But it must be an absolute other which will creatively awaken my personal self consciousness. When it is not a fellow human being, but Jesus, raised into the Father's loving realm, speaks personally to me, the prayer conversation then becomes silent, it turns to *contemplatio*, it becomes a loving prayer of the heart. The self then 'dies'. 'Since I have recognized you, my own heightened self ... Lord, let me understand that it is you who moves the fibres of my soul so as to penetrate into the marrow of my being and draw me into yourself (thus Teilhard de Chardin).

Paul could put it like this: 'I am alive, yet it is no longer I, but Christ living in me' (Gal. 2, 19b-20) which in the context means for him 'I have been crucified with Christ ... The life that I am now living, subject to the limitations of human nature, I am living in faith, faith in the Son of God who loves me and gave himself for me'. One no longer needs the beginners' notepad and pencil, since the Inner Master has taken over guidance.

There is yet need for a helpful directive: When reflective prayer becomes deeper and more mature, it tends usually to become dry, empty and dark. One then needs to remain in darkness, in the desert, quietly and contently, as long as it pleases the Lord. R. Faricy describes this dark contemplation thus (p. 19f): 'I can contemplate when the lights are on, I experience the Lord's presence and feel wonderful. But I can also be in a dark contemplation. The same person will experience different kinds of contemplation in different phases of life ...

The Jesus prayer signifies for those who practise it a way towards inner freedom

In any case the most important thing in contemplative prayer is that the Lord is there and that I am there I do not need to say much. He does the work. The Lord leads ... How does he lead me? By putting me at ease in relation with him, and a certain feeling of tranquillity and inner peace, in my relation with him. There is here a

distinction to be made between darkness and desolation. We read in R. Faricy (ibid. 37f): 'There is a difference between darkness and desolation, contemplation can very often be dark; but desolate over a long time it should never be. With patience, staying power and love I can come out of the phase of desolation (hopefully the sooner the better) and into peace and a feeling of tranquillity in my relation with the Lord. Then I let him go on purifying me, but without such a miserable feeling.'

An Addition: The Rosary of Love

In addition it is worth drawing attention to an aid to prayer which could perhaps be helpful especially to beginners in reflective prayer who are already prepared in the pre-school of the rosary (which is also a Jesus prayer!). It could perhaps help some people, now and again, to take rosary beads in hand, weaving the five prepared prayer sentences into the Jesus prayer. In this way repeating 10 times the 5 prayer sentences can pray a rosary with 5 sections.

Someone who so wishes may remain with one prayer sentence and repeat this one section 50 times, or more often. In the end it might be preferable to say only the Jesus prayer, leaving the woven in sentence in the heart. The rosary itself may fall with the realisation that the repeated invocation of the name of Jesus satisfies the heart. It becomes clear that the name of Jesus encompasses the whole story of Christ and his secret. The Jesus prayer has become contemplative, an everlasting prayer of the heart.

The Rosary of love with its 3 times 5 prayer sentences (according to Jn 21, 15-19) offers a model of how every Gospel and every Scripture



text can be integrated into the Jesus prayer and thus be existentially adopted.

We can pray the 'rosary of love', introducing it (at the cross of the beads, instead of the *confession of faith*):

Come Holy Spirit,
fill the hearts of your faithful
and kindle in them the fire of your
love,
Send forth your Spirit
and everything will be created afresh
and you will renew the face of the
earth.
Glory be to the Father ...

After that (as usual) the Our Father
and 3 Aves, asking for faith, hope and
love.

Before every one of the 15 sentences,
instead of the Our father the prayer:

My Lord and my God,
take everything from me which
separates me from you.
My Lord and my God
give me everything which brings me
closer to you.
My Lord and my God
take me away from myself and make
me wholly your own.

After that (instead of the 10 Aves)
always the Jesus prayer with a 10
times included prayer sentence, as
follows:

Lord Jesus Christ (Son of God)
have mercy on me.
Lord, I know that you love me,
have mercy on me.

To conclude, after the sentence, as
usual:

Glory to the Father ...

Here are the 3 x 5 sentences of the
'rosary of love':

I.

1. Lord I know that you love me.
2. Lord I know that you love me all the same.
3. Lord, I know that you still loves me.
4. Lord, I know that you love me unconditionally.
5. Lord, I know that you love me endlessly.

II.

1. Lord, you know that I love you.
2. Lord, you know that I love you all the same.
3. Lord, you know that I still love you.
4. Lord, you know that I love you again.
5. Lord, you know that I want to love you without end.

III.

1. Lord, I know that you are love.
2. Lord, I know that your love holds me together.
3. Lord, I know that your love guides me.
4. Lord, I want to follow you lovingly (even on the Way of the Cross).
5. Lord, keep me in your love. ♦

(Transl.: Henry Wansbrough)

Selected examples for praying with the gospel readings

Third Week of the Year in Ordinary Time: Friday (Mk 4:26-29)

RSV Mark 4:26 And he said, «The kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed upon the ground,²⁷ and should sleep and rise night and day, and the seed should sprout and grow, he knows not how.²⁸ The earth produces of itself, first the blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear. ²⁹ But when the grain is ripe, at once he puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come.»

- You sow the word and the Father makes it grow miraculously
- God does his work alone, you watch without care
- God's activity makes the word bring forth fruit
- You are speaking of God's great success in harvesting
- The end of everything is the salvation of God

First Week of Lent: Saturday (Matt 5:43-44.45.48)

RSV Matthew 5:43 «You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.'⁴⁴ But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, ⁴⁵ so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. ⁴⁶ For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? ⁴⁷ And if you salute only your brethren, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same?⁴⁸ You, therefore, must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

- Whoever listens to you does not hear what «they» say
- You prayed for those who crucified you
- You present my enemy to me as «neighbor»
- You show us God's way
- You alone are as good as God

Twenty-second week of the year in ordinary time: Friday (Lk 5:36-38)

RSV Luke 5:36 He told them a parable also: «No one tears a piece from a new garment and puts it upon an old garment; if he does, he will tear the new, and the piece from the new will not match the old.³⁷ And no one puts new wine into old wineskins; if he does, the new wine will burst the skins and it will be spilled, and the skins will be destroyed. ³⁸ But new wine must be put into fresh wineskins.

- See, you will renew everything
- You already brought the new wine of the last times (final age)
- You are an uncomfortable innovator
- You are institutionalising many novelties
- Give us courage to accept your innovations



From the history of prayerful Scripture reading

The school of unceasing prayer

John Cassian

John Cassian (ca. 365-435) was one of the outstanding spiritual fathers in early christianity. The 'Conferences of the Fathers' contain his teaching about the spiritual life. In Coll. 10, 10 are found instructions concerning interior prayer. Here are a few examples of Cassian's method of prayerful reading of the Sacred Scriptures.

You made an admirable comparison between spiritual discipline and the education of children. A child cannot recognize or make letters before it has become used to seeing them every day in wax copies. In the same way I must give you the formula for contemplation. If you carefully keep this formula in front of you, and learn to recollect it all the time, you can use it to mount to the contemplation of high truth.

The formula is: 'O God, make speed to save me: O Lord, make haste to help me.' (Ps 69:2). It fits every mood and temper of human nature, every temptation, every circumstance. It contains an invocation of God, a

humble confession of faith, a reverent watchfulness, a meditation upon our frailty, a confidence in God's ever-present support. The man who continually invokes God as his guardian, is aware that he is always at hand.

Perhaps I want to keep my heart stable by forcing myself to read the Bible. But a headache stops me, by nine o'clock in the morning I have fallen asleep with my head on the page of the Holy Scripture - in this case I must say: 'O God, make speed to save me: O Lord, make haste to help me.'

Perhaps temptations to anger, or avarice, or melancholy afflict me and force me to disturb my calm state, so pleasant to me. I must prevent myself being bitter by crying aloud: 'O God, make speed to save me: O Lord, make haste to help me.'

Perhaps some temptation to accidie, or vanity, or pride, or to despise my neighbour creeps upon the mind. To stop this, I must pray with deep contrition: 'O God, make speed to save me: O Lord, make haste to help me.'

Perhaps I have repented long and so have pricked the bubble of pride and gained the grace of humility and simplicity. So that 'the foot of pride' may not again 'come against me,' and 'the hand of the sinner disturb me.' and that satisfaction at my success may not cause still worse moral damage, I must call with my whole heart: 'O God, make speed to save me: O Lord, make haste to help me.'

Perhaps wandering thoughts career about the soul like boiling water, and I cannot contest them, nor can I offer prayer without silly mental images interrupting it; I feel so dry that I seem incapable of spiritual feeling, and many sighs and groans cannot save me from dreariness - I must needs say: 'O God, make speed to save me: O Lord, make haste to help me.'

Then the Lord restores and consoles me, and I feel that he is garrisoning me with his countless hosts of angels. To abide by God's grace in this strength and courage, I must say with my whole heart: 'O God, make speed to save me: O Lord, make haste to help me.'

You should write these words on the doors of your lips, the walls of your house, the sanctuary of your breast. When you rise up from praying and turn to the needs of your daily life, this should be your prayer.

He, who practices this prayer, will make the thoughts of the psalms his own. He will sing them no longer as verses composed by a prophet, but as born of his own prayers. At least he should use them as intended for his own mouth, and know that they were not fulfilled temporarily in the prophet's age and circumstances, but are being fulfilled in his daily life.

We see the Word of God reflected in the clear glass of our own moral experience. We will not merely recite it like texts committed to memory, but bring it out from the depths of the heart as an expression of moral reality.

Follow-up to the Hong Kong Plenary Assembly

To enter into God's heart through God's word

A Commentary on the "Final Statement"

by Daniel Kosch, Moderator of the Executive Committee
of the CBF

1. A harmless document?

The Hong Kong Final Statement differs notably in style from similar texts: it is not a resolution, a program for work nor a statement. It is not systematically constructed, it formulates no theses and no directives that trans-

late immediately into daily life. A first superficial reading may give the impression that it is a harmless document without character and contains hardly anything new or future oriented. Within the Federation, especially those who were strongly oriented toward the Bogota Final Statement and who were pleased with its committed, liberation-theology language, may find it a step backwards.

That it is possible to read the text entitled "Word of God - Source of Life" in this way, I will not dispute. I will also not dispute the fact that the text, which, by the way, is much shorter than that of Bogota, leaves much open, is perhaps not entirely consistent and above all in the concluding section with the "self-commitments" contains in part rather fortuitous postulates, which are not strongly anchored either in the preceding text nor in the dynamic of the meeting.

But with my commentary I would like to try to show that this Final Statement can be read in a quite different way and that it is exactly for the more analytically thinking and working members of the CBF in western Europe (from which I come) and possibly also in other parts of the world, a challenge to give more serious thought to this Final Statement and its implications for biblical pastoral work (and the work of the Federation and its members).

2. A *lectio divina* of John 4:1-42 inspired by the Asian Context

In the Final Statement itself the Hong Kong text is designated as a *lectio divina* of John 4:1-42. It is the attempt to bring together in conversation the biblical text that was at the center of the meeting and the experiences of the delegates so that they would be mutually illuminating. This interaction between "Word of God" and "reality" (3.2), that must be considered a central aspect of a religious reading of the Scripture, is not only demanded but tried out in this document. In this way it moves unmistakably on the path of the Bogota document whose key concept was, as is well known, "context."

For the reading of the Hong Kong Final Statement, this indication of its literary genus is very important. One cannot read it without having already read John 4:1-42. This magnificent text, which narrates the meeting of Jesus with the woman at the well, has for its part the character of a narrative whose deeper dimensions are not revealed at the first reading.

The "deepening of insight takes place gradually" (3.3). A superficial reading of John 4 does not permit one to recognize either a "plan" or a clear "structure." The narrative invites one to pause, must be reflected upon



calmly and reread (2.1). It releases a process of conversion (3.3) in the readers who read it "with respect before the living text" (6.5).

In spite of its "meditative - narrative character" John 4 is in no way a "harmless" text. It has far reaching consequences for our picture of Jesus Christ, for the correct understanding of worship and of God's activity in the world. With regard to the question of the right way to lead people to the recognition of Jesus as the "Savior of the World" (John 4:42), and also with regard to the role of women as apostles (John 4:28) as well as with regard to the dialogue between cultures and religions that cuts across borders, I would suggest that the Church has a long way to go to fully grasp the meaning of the text. For it also "the process of conversion is the task of a lifetime" (3.3) and for it also "the path that Jesus points out as leading to the source of life is a difficult path, a path beset by conflict" (4.6).

All this, however, is not evident from a first reading of John 4, as already noted, but only after a careful reading from different approaches, as Carlos Mesters proposed in exemplary fashion for the delegates in Hong Kong with his ten helps for reading (BDV 40/41, S. 25-33). Without wanting to place the Hong Kong Final Statement on the same level with the biblical text, I am of the opinion that this *lectio divina* will only prove productive and stimulating, if we read it in the spirit of John 4 with the thirst that the woman brought to the well and then to faith in Jesus Christ.

The Hong Kong Final Statement contains challenges and stimulation not only in its concluding section (8.) but also - in a narrative and at first sight inconspicuous form - in the whole text. This is not "confrontational" but relies - corresponding to the Asian esteem for the "harmonious wisdom" and its search for life in the "cave of

the heart" (1.2) - on the transforming power of the Word, that unfolds itself especially when it can ring out in open space and in silence and can touch the heart.

For a better understanding of this "Asian" style of reading the Bible (1.2; 6.5), I can only refer to the contribution of Sr. Maria Ko Ha-Fong (BDV 40/41, p. 11-24). It was, in addition to the text of John 4 itself and the already mentioned *lectio divina* of Carlos Mesters, the strongest source of inspiration for the content and style of the Hong Kong document.

3. From Bogota to Hong Kong

The plenary assembly and the Hong Kong Final Statement quite consciously want to take up and develop the insights gained in Bogota (8.2.1), but refrain from an extensive repetition.

Whoever reads the text carefully will, for example, rediscover already in the first paragraph the triangle of "biblical text", "community of readers" and "social context" that is of fundamental importance in the Latin American tradition of Bible reading and in the Bogota Final Statement (see my Hong Kong contribution on methods of reflection in: Word of God - Source of Life, 88-116). The economic, social and cultural-religious context is also addressed concretely (esp. 2.4; 3.2; 5.3.1-5.3.5; 8.1.2).

But in many respects the Hong Kong document places a different stress and further develops Bogota. While the Bogota document stresses very strongly that "the reality in which we find ourselves" is the starting point (Bogota 7.1) and correspondingly speaks directly of the social and political (in the broadest sense) relevance of the biblical message (esp. 6.1-6.6; 8.3.5.1-8.3.5.7), the Hong Kong document places the stress

more strongly on the power of the "living Word":

"It is not first the reader who analyzes, explains and discloses the meaning of the text. Rather it is the text itself that enlightens and reveals its truth." (6.5). Correspondingly a non-narrowly focused, open kind of Bible reading is demanded: "Hence, the reader comes in grateful wonder and sincere humility, in openness, in readiness to be surprised, to give praise, to be immersed in the infinite, to enter into God's word, to be caught up in the fullness of life, a life which is walking in love and in light." (6.6)

If one reads - as is the intention of the Hong Kong document - both final statements with one another, there arises a creative tension between a more social analytical Bible reading that seeks to change the external conditions of life and a more strongly meditative way of reading the Bible that addresses the deeper dimensions of life. That this is not connected with a step backwards into a individualistic and private reading of the Bible, but rather with achieving a unity of "mysticism and opposition", of "spirituality and action", Maria Ko Ha-Fong once again very nicely indicated, when she said:

"Perhaps this power of the heart, very much highlighted in Asian spirituality, has not yet been sufficiently explored by Christian theologians. The Christian message in Asia (and not only there! D. K.) often appeals only to the intelligence by means of doctrine, and doesn't reach this meeting of hearts... In Asian culture and religion there is much reflection on the reality of suffering, mercy and compassion, on universal love, on peace and on harmony. These are themes that present a strong link to the Biblical message, themes that must not be treated merely with an intellectual approach alone, but by way of heart." (BDV 40/41, p. 24)

4. The Hong Kong Document as a Stimulus for further Work

If one looks only at the challenges and initiatives in the concluding section of the text, it is impossible to lay out a plan of action in the sense of individual points so as to be able to check later whether the document had been implemented or not. Likewise it would be pointless to stress on the one hand the significance of the "particular context" and on the other hand to insist that all members of the Federation draw the same conclusions from the document. In this sense the final part of my commentary is the most subjective and most strongly colored by my own interests.

4.1 To Discover the Word of God anew as a Source of Life

A first reflection is linked to the image of the "well" and to the experience that even the text in John 4:1-42 seeks to lead the reader to something deeper. Whoever wishes "to enter God's heart through God's word" (6.6), needs recollection, quiet and concentration. Hectic activity and dissipation of resources, which characterize not only the society, but also the life of the Church and - I say it often and self-critically - also biblical pastoral work, are detrimental to such a process, which presents itself as "the task of a lifetime." (3.3)

If even in my West-European context, people, who are searching and are sensitive to the divine, are so strongly fascinated by the religions and spirituality of Asia, this has to do with the fact that they no longer hear a living Word in the many words (even if they are all biblical) in the Church.

This "Asian" (but also in biblical - Jewish and that of Jesus - mysticism) concentration, deeply anchored on the "one thing necessary", this thirst for the "source of life" needs to be taken seriously not only in concrete

every day biblical pastoral work and in the spirituality of the "servants of the Word". It also has effects on our understanding of what Church and theology are and ought to be.

The last Council formulated it very well: "The study of the sacred page is ... the soul of sacred theology" (DV 24). If this assertion is supposed to be more than a nice but empty saying, then the whole life of the Church must receive its orientation from the Bible and be oriented toward the Bible.

In reality, however, questions of structure and organization, the division of power and money, conflicts between persons and opinions about the life of the Church, are determinative, and it is seldom to be recognized that these matters are really tackled in the spirit and in the light of the biblical message.

4.2 A common experience-based and faith-oriented reading of the Bible

A second reflection is linked to the specific way of reading the Bible that occupied center place in the Hong Kong assembly and that characterizes the Final Statement as well. It is designated as "lectio divina". This expression is difficult to translate and is made concrete in different ways.

The Hong Kong Final Statement mentions as essential features of this way of reading the Bible: interaction between the biblical text and experience (1.2) and reading with the consciousness of the "presence of God" (4.4). If one connects both these characteristics with the triangle of "text - community of faith - context", then one can speak of a "common, experience-based, faith-oriented" reading of the Bible.

Reflection on such a way of reading the Bible has characterized the work of the Catholic Biblical Federation for many years. The final statements of

both the last plenary assemblies, the stimulation of the previous and present president of the Federation, as well as many contributions in the Bulletin, results of regional and local meetings, revolve around this theme.

As far as the search for the core, for the depth and also for the specific contribution that the Catholic Biblical Federation can make to the life of the Church in the spirit of Hong Kong goes, it seems to me that the stress and the emphasis on this shared concern in the work of the Federation and its members is important.

Obviously the members of the CBF can and should pursue other matters as well: Bible and Liturgy, Bible and catechetics, the connection between exegetical formation with the needs of preaching and pastoral work, etc.

But in view of an increasingly specialized and differentiated world and the plurality of methods of reading the Bible on the one hand, and the limited means and forces of the Federation and of its members on the other hand, the concentration on a common, experience-based, faith-oriented reading of the Bible, as the Hong Kong document proposes, would be a possible stimulus for future work.

4.3 To enter into the dialogue of life

A final reflection is connected to the multireligious situation in Hong Kong (but also in many parts of our world) as well as to the experience of a plenary assembly in the "secular" spaces of a university of science and technology. It also takes up the recurring theme of "dialogue" in the Final Statement, which is connected to the meeting of the Jew Jesus and the woman from Samaria.

The better we understand the essence of the biblical message the clearer we will see how closely we are con-



nected with all the others and how much we can learn from each other.

The dialogue with other religions and world viewpoints as well as with all people of good will, oriented toward the great challenges and threats of our time, is becoming more and more important for life on our planet. The concentration on the Bible should not lead to enclosing ourselves within church walls and give the impression that we alone have the solutions for the questions of our time.

To the extent that the true essence of the biblical message discloses itself

to us, we will recognize more clearly how closely connected we are with all others and how much we can learn from one another.

The relationship between the Bible and other sacred scriptures, as well as the question of a biblically anchored Christian identity in a multireligious and increasingly secular world were indeed addressed in Hong Kong, but the question of what it means, in this context, "to worship God in spirit and truth" (John 4:23f.) needs to be meditated and reflected upon further. ♦

(Transl.: Mark Sheridan)

meeting one often heard speak of the "ecumenical movement with two speeds", since the Russian Orthodox Church especially is skeptical with regard to ecumenism at the present time.

Finally it turns out, from a visit to the market of possibilities and in the ecumenical village, that there is also an "ecumenical movement from below", where base groups, networks and church organizations with their concrete ecumenical reconciliation work are already far in advance with regard to the "ecumenical movement from above", the church leaders and teachers, who are stuck in endless theological discussions and disputes ... As far as this situation is concerned, no reconciliation was reached in Graz.

So much the more therefore does the question pose itself as to how in the future our ecumenical work can be organized so as not to lose the slower ones among us along the way, but at the same time without having to give up what we have already achieved.

Against this background, I offer a few modest reflections and questions that can serve as a stimulus.

The CBF and the ecumenical movement

- What is the situation regarding ecumenical collaboration on all levels (local, regional, international)?
- How and where could ecumenical projects be intensified and possibly also "institutionalized" (in the sense of a new established tradition)?
- Where could already existing ecumenical projects receive additional support or contributions, that is, be augmented on the biblical front (for example, the World Day of Prayer, the Week of Prayer for Unity, etc.)?
- In the Recommendations for Action (Nm. 1.3) worked out in Graz, one finds an official instruction: "We commend to the churches to take in

For Reflection

Stimulus from Graz for the Catholic Biblical Federation

**Anastasia Bernet,
Service Biblique Diocésain**

Last year, as delegate of the Catholic Church in Luxembourg and as representative of the CBF, I took part in the second European Ecumenical Assembly in Graz. It was held with the theme: "Reconciliation - Gift of God and Source of new Life".

During this meeting I became conscious how different we Christians are. On the one hand this results in a rich and colorful variety of different communities and churches, but on the other hand it raises considerable difficulties with regard to understanding and agreement among such different cultures, traditions and teachings. As a result, during this

hand and to advance energetically the task of ecumenical education and formation. They should organize especially common Bible Study programs ..."

The CBF and Judaism

After Graz there needs to be additional work on the improvement of relations between Judaism and Christianity. Some suggestions from the Jewish side concern also biblical interpretation and biblical pastoral work:

- a revaluation of the First Testament
- the tetragrammaton as a designation for God should no longer be pronounced but paraphrased
- anti-Semitic biblical interpretation should be exposed and avoided
- the advancement of interreligious biblical projects (publications and events)

The CBF and Social Justice

In the Recommendations for action from Graz the churches are called upon to initiate processes of consultation on economic and social questions in their own countries as well as with a view to a just balance between different regions of the world (North-South, West-East). The bible offers a whole range of subjects that could be addressed in this context, for example:

- contact with strangers (war refugees, those seeking asylum)
- on the occasion of the Jubilee of 2000: biblical models of forgiveness of debts (economic) in favor of the disadvantaged
- biblical stimulus with regard to the subject of the distribution of natural, financial, cultural and spiritual riches
- on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the Declaration of Human Rights (1998): the Bible and Human Rights
- forms and models for overcoming conflicts

- biblical contact with marginal groups
In regard to all of these proposals, one could think of educational activity in the form of publications and events.

The CBF and Women

In Graz it was made evident that the 'women's question' - precisely because it was pushed to the side and made taboo - is a central question in the ecumenical dialogue between different Christian churches. Therefore it should be given prominence here.

The Base-text (A 16) begins with a confession of guilt on the part of the churches in regard to their "unworthy attitude" regarding women in the society and in the church, which endures to this day. In the Base-text as well as in the Communication it is affirmed that man and woman are created in the image of God and are thus equal before God. Unfortunately the conclusions drawn from this insight are very limited.

In the Recommendations for Action the demand for equal opportunity for women and the struggle against all forms of violence against women are emphasized. About the question of equal rights for women within the churches nothing is said (3.3). Against this background I see the need to develop this question in two directions:

1. The situation of women within the CBF

What is the situation with regard to the number of women who occupy an office within the CBF?

What is the situation with regard to the use of language? Are women mentioned explicitly or indicated by using masculine expressions?

What is the situation with regard to publications of women for women?

What is the situation with regard to specifically 'women's issues'?

What is the situation with regard to discussions? Are women taken seriously when they speak?

2. The work of the CBF on the subject of Women

In addition to the discussion and implementation of the question of 'inclusive language', which is currently being conducted in the Latin-European Subregion

- feminist exegesis could be studied and employed
- in the proposal for the revision of the lectionary stories about feminine biblical figures could be included
- educational materials regarding biblical 'stories of women' and 'women's subject's' could be planned
- works on female figures in the Bible could be published
- discrimination against women on the basis of biblical texts could be combated through educational materials and publication

The CBF and the matter of Basel and Graz

In general it can be held that the major topics of the two European Ecumenical Assemblies of Basel and Graz have not lost their relevance and urgency. Now as before we are called upon, within the context in which we live, and according to our capabilities and possibilities, to work for peace, justice, the preservation of the creation and to engage in the work of reconciliation.

The CBF could play the role of spokesperson and advocate in these areas. I can image that precisely in biblical pastoral work there is more potential than has been used up until now ...

(Transl.: Mark Sheridan)



Life of the Federation

The Pastoral Bible of Maredsous

Fr. R. F. Poswick OSB

The Bible is being offered more and more frequently not only as a printed text but also with pedagogical aids, pictures, commentary, and in modernised form, on film and CD, etc.

Electronic offers (on CD or on the Internet) make available new possibilities for interaction between the reader and the text. However, printed versions with a corresponding format also aim to take into account the reading and visual habits of modern readers and their religious, cultural and social situation.

The principal theme of last year's meeting of the Latin European Subregion was the different types of Pastoral Bible. Several different projects are in preparation. The Pastoral Bible of Maredsous presented here is an attempt to present a tried and tested version of the Bible with a few lavish means (various commentaries, means of presentation, etc.) in order to meet the needs of a specific group of readers. The intended audience is above all those living in the Catholic liturgical tradition. The Pastoral Bible of Maredsous is available also as CD.

The Pastoral Bible, conceived by the Maredsous-CIB between 1994 and 1997 and published by Brepols in autumn 1997, intends to satisfy the

need for a complete Bible with which the modern reader who is either moderately or not very educated in this field, wouldn't feel lost immediately. This need has become increasingly intense for some years. The authors aimed at doing this by keeping the revised 1968 translation of the Maredsous Bible, a very good Bible for reading aloud, but they have changed

the whole apparatus: introductions, annotations, tables.

The recipients

This edition is directed towards a traditionally catholic public and among them those agents of whatever type who make an abundant use of the Bible. The pastoral agents at all level are the first public concerned.

The editorial layout

This Bible is first and foremost a standard working Bible in one volume composed of 1902 pages. There are only a few illustrations, one on the title page and some maps inserted in the text of the introduction. A pastoral comment runs along the left margin of the pages throughout the text. This short comment develops the title given to each section.

For each biblical book, there are two introductions, one after the other. The first is pastoral. It tries to provide full information about the meaning of the text and its implication for the reader. The second is a so-called historico-critical and literary one: the text is set in its literary form and in the historical context of its birth. Footnotes of a historico-critical and literary kind, reduced to the information strictly necessary for a good comprehension of the text, are given at the bottom of the page. This information is completed by the lexicon at the back of the volume.

In the biblical text, the apparatus draws attention to the beginning of a section or liturgical reading at the synagogue, in the byzantine or catholic liturgy. Liturgical or biblical tables of these sections are found at the back of the volume.

References concerning the topical uses of the biblical texts which form

the basis of some items in the texts of Vatican II, the Catechism of the Catholic Church and two important inter-confessional documents of Faith and Constitution (Ecumenical Council of the Churches) are added to the marginal notes of a pastoral nature.

The biblical text

It is an edition of the complete Bible with the deuterocanonical texts set out as in a standard catholic Bible (a separate New Testament will be published later). The text has been translated by Georges Passelecq, revised in 1968 by the monks of the abbey of Maredsous and Hautecombe.

The comments

A special effort has been made to clearly distinguish all that is related to pastoral, hermeneutics, and all that is related to historico-critical study and exegesis. The coherence between the explanation of the title of the biblical book, the pastoral introduction, the titles of the section and the pastoral comments has been inspired by the Brazilian pastoral version (Biblia Sagrada, Edição Pastoral, Paulinas Press, S. Paulo, Brazil 1990). Great attention has been paid to the differing sensitivities of the non-Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, even agnostic readers.

The pastoral comment intends to draw out in modern language the main sense of the text, especially by setting it in the organic development of the Revelation and the gradual fulfilment of God's plan of love for the world. It gives means for actualizing the text and relating it to the problems of our time. An effort has been made to derive the spiritual sense from the literal sense, trying to avoid the extrinsic, moralizing or psychologizing applications. The symbolical and archetypal value of the narratives, persons, bib-

lical institutions has been emphasized. The comment intends to awake the reader's thought rather than to provide him with ready-made ideas.

The electronic version

An electronic version of the Pastoral Bible will not only allow a combined access to all the elements of the text, comments and tables, but will also associate these elements with those that can be found in the atlas *The Bible through maps* by Aharoni and Avi-Yonah, and with adapted photographic documents. The picture should

help the reading of the text (and not the opposite).

The authors

The Centre Informatique et Bible of the abbey of Maredsous (B-5537 Denée, Belgique- Fax: 32 (0) 82. 22. 32. 69. E-Mail: cib-@maredsous.be) carried out the implementation of this edition under the supervision and with the help of pastors and professors of the Catholic University of Louvain-La-Neuve. ◆

(Transl.: Emmanuel Billoteau)

Meeting of the Latin-European Subregion of the Catholic Bible Federation

London, October 10-12, 1997

Irene Vega

The yearly meeting of the Latin European Subregion of the Catholic Bible Federation took place in London October 10-12, 1997. The participants came from the following countries: Portugal, Malta, Catalonia, Italy, Luxembourg, Spain, France, Switzer-

land, Great Britain, Belgium and Germany. In addition two invited guests from the United States took part.

At the beginning of the meeting the participants exchanged information about the chief aspects of Biblical pastoral work in their countries and discussed their plans and difficulties. After that, the central theme of the



meetings, Bibles for pastoral use, was presented. The representatives from Belgium had prepared an extensive report on this subject and introduced the new Pastoral Bible of their center in Maredsous, which is also furnished with a multimedia CD. The participant from France gave an overview of the development in his country. The evaluation of editions of the bible from the different countries produced two types of Pastoral Bibles. The majority of the editions are in easy to understand language and offer a range of aids for study (maps, notes, introductions, pictures, pastoral comments, applications), which make the text easier to understand. Others, however, present the text as one voice among many (pictures, poetry, film ...). The bible is no longer the

central point, but becomes one of the elements that enter into dialogue with life. This second type of Pastoral Bible seeks to bring the text nearer to non-believers and above all to reach the youth.

Finally the working group occupied itself with the recommendations of the concluding document from the plenary session in Hongkong and made suggestions for their implementation in the different countries of the sub-region.

The next meeting will take place in Madrid in October 1998. The chief subject will be ecumenical collaboration in biblical pastoral work.

(Transl.: Mark Sheridan)

tures and with informative commentary. Pictures and sound together produce an impressive atmosphere. The series offers answers to the questions and doubts that recur in connection with the person of Jesus for many youth and adults, believers and unbelievers. It is done in a refreshingly new and fascinating way by leading us to the places where Jesus lived in order to present his words in a living setting.

Each film is accompanied by a teaching handbook with texts that complement the contents of the film, recommended biblical passages and discussion questions and thus is suitable as an instrument for further biblical and catechetical instruction, for the school, for Christian groups and movements, parishes and families.

The video series *SULLE ORME DI CRISTO* is presently being prepared in different languages. After the just completed Italian version the Spanish and Portuguese versions will appear and after that the English and Polish versions. Translations into Korean and Japanese have already been completed.

SULLE ORME DI CRISTO

10 Videos of 30 minutes each

Technical advisor: G. Ravasi

Direction: A. Castellani and G. C. Cappellaro

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(Transl.: Henry Wansbrough)

“SULLE ORME DI CRISTO - Following in the tracks of Christ”

The Way of Christ on Earth, presented in 10 video films

shows the historical and geographical context of the time of Jesus supported by archaeological discoveries. This ambitious project is based on extensive studies of the gospels and medieval sources taking into account the most recent developments in biblical research.

The life of Jesus and his teaching are presented in unusually striking pic-

The Italian publishing firm “Edizioni Paoline” is offering a series of 10 videos about the Holy Land and especially about the milieu of the development of the New Testament. It

Bible Weeks in Ecuador

Themes related to the Year of the Holy Spirit marked the fifth National Bible Week in Ecuador ("El Espíritu Santo en las Comunidades"), which took place November 23-30, 1997. The official date for the National Bible Week is the time between the feast of Christ the King and the First Sunday of Advent. Each diocese, however, can set its own schedule. Extensive materials from the fifth National Bible Week are available for Bible groups and their leaders in two volumes with slides and cassettes. These materials have proven useful in the groups throughout the whole year.

Preparations are under way for the sixth National Bible Week (November 22-29, 1998), which will be dedicated to the theme of the third year of preparation for the Jubilee of 2000: God the Father.

*Departamento de Evangelización
de la Conferencia Episcopal Ecuato-
riana
Av. América 1805 y La Gasca
Apdo. 17-01-1081
Quito, Ecuador* ◆

The Catholic Biblical Federation (CBF) is a world-wide association of Catholic organizations committed to ministry to the Word of God. At the present time, the CBF membership includes 89 full members and 216 associate members coming from a total of 123 countries.

The activities of these organizations include the preparation of Catholic and interconfessional Bible translations, the propagation of Bibles and in general the promotion of a deeper understanding of the Holy Scripture.

The CBF promotes the biblical pastoral activities of these organizations, provides a forum for the world-wide sharing of experiences in the field, searches for new ways of bringing the joy of God's Word to the faithful throughout the world. The Federation seeks collaboration with the representatives of biblical scholarship as well as with Bible societies of various confessions.

In particular, the CBF works toward the promotion of the reading of the Bible within the context of concrete life situations and the training of ministers of the Word in this direction.

The ministry to the Word of God is ministry to the unity of and communication between human beings. A world which grows together with the help of modern communications and yet continues to show signs of hate and destruction needs more than ever words of peace and of fellowship with God and with each other.

Wilhelm Egger, Bishop of Bozen-Brixen, President CBF