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Bible and Liturgy

Word of God and the Celebration
of the Church

On the Way to Dar es Salaam II
CBF's Seventh Plenary Assembly

The Word of God in the Mission of the Church

Bishops' Synod on the Word of God



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tries, the surface of the globe was covered with banknotes and bills.

Out of Balance – the expression is applicable not only to financial markets but also to many other experiences and relationships of our day: people are being exploited and cheated of their just wages; the earth's resources are being squandered, commodities are in ever shorter supply and food and groceries have become so expensive that many can no longer afford them; the poor (both people and countries) are being exploited by the rich, and the legitimate rights of minorities are being violently suppressed. Leaders in commerce, in politics, yes, sometimes even in the Church, place their own interests above those of the community – we are all familiar with these and other examples of imbalance. And when things get out of balance, then injustice begins, conflict develops, hatred and violence arise.

This situation of imbalance in our world will also be raised at the upcoming Plenary Assembly of the CBF, which has committed itself to the theme "reconciliation, justice and peace". The first item on the agenda, then, for the more than 230 registered participants, will be an appraisal and analysis of the current social, societal, religious and political situation in the various regions of the world. Only then can the next important step be taken: thereafter to ask what contribution the Christian faith, and the Bible as Word of God in particular, might make to procure a renewed hearing for justice in our time, to instigate reconciliation and to foster collaboration for peace in our world. In other words: to contribute in an active way to the reinstatement of a lost balance.

We must have no illusions. We must not be naive. If we listen to the voice of God, we make our choice, get out of ourselves, and fight nonviolently for a better world. We must not expect to find it easy; we shall not walk on

roses, people will not throng to hear us and applaud, and we shall not always be aware of divine protection. If we are to be pilgrims of justice and peace, we must expect the desert.

This is how Dom Hélder Câmara, former Archbishop of Olinda and Recife in Brazil and staunch combatant for a just world, described the experience of those Christians who engage in efforts to advance justice and peace. The commitment is no easy thing; it requires courage and endurance, as well as deftness and discretion. And it leads not only through "green pastures and watery resting places" (cf. Ps 23), but often straight through the desert as well.

The picture of this journey through the wilderness is a profoundly biblical one. Perhaps what comes to mind first when we imagine this itinerary are catchwords like danger, threat and death. But the wilderness is also a symbol of promise and a place of hope. "We must await the wilderness" – but we need not fear it: *Then justice will dwell in the desert, and righteousness abide in the fruitful field. And the effect of righteousness will be peace, and the result of righteousness, quietness and trust for ever. My people will abide in a peaceful habitation, in secure dwellings, and in quiet resting places.* (Is 32:16-18)

The present issue of the *Bulletin Dei Verbum* has various focuses this time, from the point of view of contents: the first articles treat the relationship between Bible and Liturgy, a fundamental theme for the self-understanding of the Church; you will next find updated information on each of the two great events of biblical pastoral ministry for the year 2008: the CBF Plenary Assembly and the Bishops' Synod on the Word of God – but your attention is, of course, also recommended for the remaining titles!

With this reading I wish you – in the sense of Isaiah and of Dom Hélder – both "wilderness and garden" experiences.

Yours truly,

Claudio Ettl



The Bible – the Performative Book

The Fruitful Polarities of Bible and Liturgy

Egbert Ballhorn



Dr. Egbert Ballhorn studied Catholic Theology in Bonn, Vienna and Jerusalem. He is a lecturer for Biblical Theology at the Diocesan Seminary of Hildesheim, Germany.

Bible and liturgy are not two separate worlds that have to be brought together only secondarily. Rather, they are intrinsically and fundamentally related to each other, as faith experiences also show. The following example can illustrate this point. It is a Saturday afternoon in Lent: in the church believers move in pairs toward the altar, before which stands a large basin of holy water, and each makes the sign of the cross with holy water on the forehead of the other with the words: "You are God's beloved son. You are God's beloved daughter." Everyone comes forward in this way. A palpable silence reigns throughout the liturgy. Many are inwardly struck by the idea that they are really receiving the Divine Word of acceptance from the mouth of the sister or the brother along with the sign of the cross. The setting for this liturgical experience was a day-long seminar on the biblical readings for the Easter Vigil. Under the title: "Waters of death – waters of life" the readings and orations as well as the theology of Baptism in the Easter Vigil were explained.

Along with bread and wine, fire and water constitute the profound symbols of the Easter Vigil – which the celebrating community is often able to experience far more intensively at Easter than in other liturgies of the year. Like the Bible itself, the Easter Vigil liturgy of the Word begins with Gn 1: with chaos, darkness and the primeval waters. Here water initially appears as a life-threatening element. The creative action of God consists in the act of fashioning the firmament of the heavens and thereby setting a limit to the dangerous waters, so that the dry land can appear. A space for life can thus emerge for the first time. But God does not then ban water from the space of life, but by establishing limits for the water he enables it at the same time to be transformed from waters of death to life-giving waters. As "sea" water has its own good place in the creation and will become itself a place for life. When with these reading experiences we look out from the creation text

of the Bible to the Exodus reading of Israel's march through the Red Sea, we can make exciting discoveries. What happens here is that the same story of waters of death and waters of life shows up again. When Israel, pursued by the Egyptians, arrives at the banks of the Red Sea, then it has behind it the deadly threat of the enemy and before it the deadly threat of the waters, then it stands between death and death. And what does God do? The waters are moved aside; in the midst of death God creates a space for life; or as the text puts it: "he makes the sea into dry land" (Ex 14:21) – the same wording as appears in the creation account. From this viewpoint the whole of the Exodus reading, which many originally perceive as problematic, is transformed. The text takes on an entirely different emphasis: in the midst of death God creates new life. Suddenly the two texts are indeed connected to each other.

But the Easter Vigil does not stop with this. Another very prominent text is the New Testament reading from the Letter to the Romans. There Paul reminds the believers: "Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we, too, might walk in newness of life. For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his." (Rm 6:3-5). Paul continues to develop the thread that had been initiated by the two previously cited readings. Water represents the threat to human beings through death. Christ, however, entered the realm of death and rose from the dead. To be baptized, then, means to be identified with Christ, and thus symbolically buried with him in his death. But just as Christ rose from the dead, so we, too, take on a new humanity and will be raised up.

When we read the texts of the Easter Vigil in this way, their inner logic comes to light. And now the texts not only bespeak a "back then" that is past; in them, rather, the mystery of one's own life is revealed, of one's own death-threatened existence and one's own salvation through communion with Christ. The entire liturgy of the Easter Vigil is no mere memorial of the resurrection of Christ, but a great *celebration of baptism and of the baptism commemoration*. In the celebration of baptism the mystery of Easter is applied to each individual



believer. This dimension has from the beginning been constitutive of the celebration; this is seen most clearly in the orations following the individual readings, all of which point to baptism as the beginning of the new life.

In this way the liturgy of the Church picks up on the great movement which the Bible achieves and whose intention is to draw all human beings into the great salvation event. Baptism is the gate through which people of all times can climb on board God's great offer of salvation that is attested to by the Bible.

In all of its texts, the Bible is no mere history book; its intention is rather to take hold of people, helping them down through the ages to open themselves to the action of God toward humankind. In the form of mystical celebration the wisdom of the liturgy is revealed as capable of continuing this action and making it present time and time again. This same action was likewise experienced by the celebrating community of the liturgy described in my opening paragraph. The biblical words about the waters of life were experienced as relevant and real by the participants in the liturgical celebration of the baptismal memorial.

How the Bible invites its listeners

Something that was a vital part of the liturgy from the beginning, and that has been practiced in the Church ever since has perhaps been somewhat marginalized in the biblical science of recent centuries: that the Bible is a book that does not exist for its own sake alone; its aim rather is to take hold of readers and to become alive in them. Until very recently the Bible was commonly viewed as a book of a "holy past" which was only perfectly understood if one could explain how it came into being – so, the past conditions of the time in which it was written. To interpret a text meant for the most part to be able to explain the *origin* of the text. The work done by the classical historical-critical methodology represented a notable advance in the way we handle the Bible, because it constituted a counterweight to the unreflective use of the text. But with this way of framing the question it was not yet sufficiently clear what the Bible had to do with one's own life. That is why the move still has to be made from the reflective "back then" of the text's origin to the (equally reflective) "today" of the text.

In recent years developments have taken place in the areas of the literary and cultural sciences which can also be stimulating and helpful for the use of the Bible as relevant to the present. The emphasis here is on the fact that works of art and literature are not only to be viewed as self-subsistent entities which we investigate to discover the creative artists' intention; rather, the act of reception of a work of art must also be the object of our reflection. Art is only art if it is also received as such. And reading and reflecting on a work of art are not

merely ways in which we take in a prefabricated something; these acts have rather an intrinsic value and consistency of their own. What begins to emerge is a dynamic relationship between the art work and the person who receives it. There has then been a turn here from an aesthetic of text production to one of text reception, and this also has its consequences for scientific reflection on the liturgy and on the way we use the Bible.

An example from contemporary Bible translation might illustrate this change. Luke's Gospel begins with a foreword, in which the Evangelist addresses his reader directly: "it seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus" (Lk 1:3). Now it is possible to inquire as to who this Theophilus might be. It is not in fact known who he is, and almost certainly it will never be possible to positively identify the man. For this reason, a recently published German translation, *Bibel in gerechter Sprache* ("The Bible in Just and Inclusive Language"), chooses an altogether different translation for this verse, which would now read in English translation: "it seems good to me also, to write an orderly account for you, dear friend of God." This translation changes everything, without departing here from either the wording or the meaning of the Greek text. Theophilus means in translation: "friend of God." But with the translation of the name a lot more has happened than just this. The unknown figure of a Theophilus, who is sunk in the "back then" of history, has suddenly become the prototype of every reader of the Gospel. If I am in search of God, then I am myself this friend of God, then I can feel directly addressed by the foreword of this Gospel. So the modern translation makes clear that everyone alive today, every woman and every man, is intended by the text. – So both translations are true to the text, but in different ways. The word "Theophilus" remains true to the wording and sound of the Greek original; the translation "friend of God" picks up on the concern of the author to address all people down through the ages with his Gospel. I think this is a remarkably fortuitous translation. With this address in the foreword I am invited to take my place among the band of friends of God and with them to set out on a journey of discovery of God's Good News through the Gospel.

Bible-reading, as has become increasingly clear, is not a merely passive taking in and understanding of a prefabricated text, but an altogether active procedure. When, in the process of reading, I "pick up" the individual parts of a text and bind them together into a fluid whole, then I am synthetically active as a reader. At the same time every part of a text addresses my own world of experience and association. This means that texts exercise a control on me as reader and at the same time they allow me plenty of room to move around.



Jean-Paul Sartre put it this way: "Reading is controlled creativity." This is something that must be taken seriously, even when we are dealing with biblical texts.

Performativity: from participant to spectator and back

Research in the area of the humanities has in the last years and decades been highlighting the concept of the "performative" as an important focal term with a high explanatory potential. The rubric "performative" assembles a number of approaches that have to do not only with cultural texts "as such" but also with the idea in mind that the reception and the performance of texts and works of art form part of their meaning and significance. This may sound almost self-evident, but it has far-ranging consequences for the way we handle works of art and works of literature, and ultimately also the Bible.

The concept of performativity comes from the science of theatre, and this is hardly accidental. Till a short time ago the term "work" was a remote and almost sacrosanct concept. To better grasp this it might be helpful to review the history of European literature and theatre: the 18th and 19th centuries highlighted at once the aesthetic of genius and the theatre of illusion that corresponds to it: the audience room is darkened so that the viewer can not be seen (or heard either, for they were supposed to be absolutely silent from this time forward), and the piece of the author-genius was then played out on the stage. The role of the audience was just to sit and absorb it all in silence and awe. In earlier times there was no such code of behavior as this. At the time of Shakespeare, for instance, the viewers were active participants in the performance and they did not hesitate to intervene even with running commentary or noisy interjection. And even in the time of Mozart and Haydn the audience would converse with one another during the music.

So it is interesting to observe: with the highlighting of the author and his work as a self-contained whole the person at the receiving end tended to disappear entirely from view. There was nothing left for him to do but to take in the completed product that was served up to him. A turning point in this way of viewing things came only in the 1960s, and that, under the catchword "performativity". Suddenly spectators are no longer just spectators, but are encouraged to become fellow players or actors in the piece.

The composer John Cage wrote "4'33" – a piece in which the pianist sits silently at the piano for four and half minutes. The first auditors of the piece reacted with a riot at this unexpected impertinence. But silence, too, is music, and the would-be silence in the room makes clear that there are quite a number of noises that are otherwise ignored: clearing of throats, rustling, breathing, door-slamming, whispering. The audience was

thus forced into an active form of percipience that they had not anticipated: till that time one was expected to behave in a concert hall in such a way that the artist alone could make a noise, and the attention of the audience was directed only to this, while every other sound was suppressed and blanked out in the reception. But now the idea is that whatever that takes place outside the piece itself is not just background noise but rather is a constituent part of the performed piece.

Fundamental shifts in the whole conception of what constitutes a work of art have thus come about. The invisible and inaudible spectator has returned visible and audible to become an indispensable part of the performance itself. One can well imagine that this has led to irritation, not only with the piece by John Cage but in many other situations as well. Suddenly it does not suffice to remain in the role of a deeply entrenched inwardness; instead, one must take oneself and one's own presence into account as well. And viewing is already acting and stage-playing.

Remarkably the Second Vatican Council expressed something very similar in relation to the liturgy. Thus, in the constitution on the liturgy *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (SC 48) we read: "The Church, therefore, earnestly desires that Christ's faithful, when present at this mystery of faith, should not be there as strangers or silent spectators; on the contrary, through a good understanding of the rites and prayers they should take part in the sacred action, conscious of what they are doing, with devotion and full collaboration. They should be instructed by God's Word, and be nourished at the table of the Lord's body; they should give thanks to God; by offering the immaculate victim, not only through the hands of the priest but also together with him, they should learn also to offer themselves; through Christ, the Mediator, they should be drawn day by day into ever more perfect union with God and with each other, so that finally God may be all in all." – So here you have a series of very similar reflections. In both cases the aim is not to turn the participants into activists in too direct a way (this would be a misconstrual of the Council's statements), but rather to bring out anew their indispensable and proper role in the coming together of the whole and thereby always to be aware that participation at mass can only take the form of a kind of a communal celebration. In a second step this renewed awareness will inevitably influence the way we celebrate. At least such was the hope of the Council.

The performative character of the Bible

The same is true with the Kingdom of God preaching of Jesus: it does not merely discuss something "not yet here", something absent; rather, in his enthusiastic sermon the Kingdom of God is itself made alive and active. It is already there. This is something altogether different



from merely talking about it. Rather, just as in his parables Jesus speaks of the nature and activity of God, of celebration, of satisfaction and well-being, of the search for those who are lost, physically and psychologically, of how intensively God looks after the marginalized, this new world begins to take root in his hearers' hearts and to transform their lives.

What can be said of the preaching of Jesus can likewise be said of the entire Bible of both Testaments: it not only speaks of God, but allows us to experience the God of the Bible Himself in verbal form. Bible-reading means encountering God in the Word and assembling a collection of God experiences. In technical terms this means that the text of the Bible has itself already a performative character: it effects what it represents. This has its effects on any use we make of the Bible. One who listens to its texts is himself drawn into this transformation, enters the Word and becomes himself an addressee. Basically, I have only "understood" the Bible, when I not only know what it has to say and can explain its statements, but have made it the foundation of my own belief and my own life. This consideration shows that the performative character of the Bible stands in close proximity to the sacramental character of God's Word.

So it is not merely a question of "knowing" the Bible, but we must accept this performative quality associated with the Word. This constitutes the inner connection between Bible and liturgy. In every mass biblical readings are read. This is more than a mere matter of information. God Himself is alive with His Word among believers. The Word of God is event. And the converse is also the case: every Bible-reading done in common is a liturgical event! This can be experienced in a variety of very different ways: in Word of God celebrations, in Bible-sharing, in Bible circles, in biblical drama. All of these forms derive their vitality from the fact that they make room for the Word of God and the active listening, co-celebrating and participation of the faithful.

Reflection on the concept of the performative also helps us to experience the Bible as an effective and appealing book. And this means: the liturgical aspect is not something that is introduced as a secondary element to our dealings with the Bible; rather, it has been an original property of the Bible from the start. And finally this also means that active community celebration is not something added secondarily to the form of the liturgy, but has always been one of its constitutive elements.

Bible and liturgy: the Word of God is event

This is likewise a promise for the use we make of the Bible in the community realm: if we make room for Bible texts and allow them to happen, then something

really does occur when it is read. Here we find an expression of the sacramental character of the Bible: it does not remain "story", but becomes real, present. This is no magic, but ultimately a mystery, but a mystery that depends on the human being who opens himself to it: men and women who are prepared to make room for the Word of God through their speaking and their listening.



This likewise poses a question to our community practice: are there really places in the life of the community where we make time and place for the Bible to strike root in our hearts? There should then first of all be something like a keen expectation that we really have something to expect from God, something that will touch us profoundly and sustain our lives. In a second step we can then reflect on what this might mean for community practice.

Practical suggestions for our treatment of the Word of God

From my own experience in dealing with the Word of God in community work I would like to contribute the following suggestions which might help to encourage an attentive and vigilant use of the Word of God.

Silence and hearing

This means really making place for the Word of God, a place in time, too. Thus, when a biblical text is proclaimed there should always follow a period of silence and meditation, so that the Word will have a chance to really arrive, even from a reception-physiological point of view. In this way people will have the opportunity during and after the hearing to allow these words to linger, to savor them, but also to become aware of where the Word elicits resistance, where I feel something difficult or problematic. In the celebration of the Eucharist the responsorial psalm offers such an opportunity for prolonged meditative reflection on the reading. To be able to truly listen, to be attentive, to really expect something from the spoken Word of God is not



merely an optional form of behavior; it is the fundamental attitude of faith *par excellence*. To work on acquiring this attitude is a task for a lifetime.

To proclaim

The role of the reader is of the highest importance as well. The person who reads a Bible passage is at the service of God's Word. He or she becomes him- or herself a witness of God's Word. If a text is spoken by a reader without inner participation or involvement, and if it is a text he is not very familiar with himself, then it is bound to fall flat in the community as well. We are not talking about a rhetorical dramatization of the text, but simply about familiarizing oneself with the text. Only when I myself have a relationship and feel an opening to the text I am proclaiming – even if it is only in one particular passage –, will it be possible for the Word of God to mediate its effect through the vocal expression I accord it. God needs human beings who are willing to place themselves at his service, for only thus can the word literally become incarnate.

To reflect and respond

In dealing with the Word of God, after the hearing and the reflecting comes the responding. No Bible text should be left "unanswered" in space. In the Eucharistic celebration it is the acclamation of the community following the proclamation of the Word and the responsorial psalm that give expression to this dimension. But in smaller liturgical gatherings, too, self-contained forms of response are quite conceivable. These, too, can take place in ritual form, so that an external form remains, which is always helpful. So, e.g., the reading of a biblical text can be followed by a short period of silence, in which those present can utter a word from the text that resonates with them. This methodical step is known from Bible-sharing; it can also be helpful for many kinds of liturgical celebrations in smaller circles.

There are a number of advantages to just this form of personal "echoing" of the Word of God. When I know that I will have to repeat a word from a given text after a reading, then I listen to this text with a whole new attention level, waiting for a word that speaks to me. And when all those present have spoken their word, then the community of believers configures itself in a totally new way. Everyone has contributed something. And at the same time every individual learns what is important to the other.

To celebrate

What is good about the Catholic faith is that the liturgy is celebrated with of all our senses. This should also serve as a guideline for the practice of celebrating the Word of God, for this Word is also not something abstract. What it wants is to be celebrated! So, for

example, an evening liturgy might well begin with lighting a candle at the beginning and giving praise to Christ, the Light of the world. Incense, too, is an ancient liturgical symbol. Honor can be shown to the Word of God by placing grains of incense into a cup with glowing coals standing before the lectionary. During the prayers, too, or even as a silent gesture of prayer the faithful could each put in a grain of incense. A baptismal memorial can be conducted in the same way. There should be no liturgy of the Word without at least one of these ritual elements. They not only contribute to the beauty of the liturgy, but they also deepen the use of the Word of the God and bring out its multi-dimensional character. Many Bible texts themselves offer obvious links to the realm of the symbolic.

It is important here that all the faithful present take part in this practice: put in a grain of incense, pass on the light of a candle, sign his or her neighbor with the sign of the cross. Even a common procession can be performed. If possible there should be no liturgy of the Word in which the faithful have not actively contributed in this way. Such activity displays the community of the believers, and thus is Church actualized. The external participation of all signifies and makes possible also the internal participation. This is what the Council meant by *participatio actuosa*, which is something other than mere aimless activism. We are not talking about something like staging, and still less of self-advertising; rather it is a matter of strengthening all the faithful in their baptismal charism. The Word of God can then be celebrated with ceremony and can be experienced by us in all its effective power.

In the context of what has here been said, one can only look forward with anticipation to the Bishops' Synod on the Word of God in Rome and hope for further reinforcement in the way we treat God's Word.

Abbreviated version of an article which originally appeared in the journal Bibel und Liturgie 80 (2008), p. 243-250.

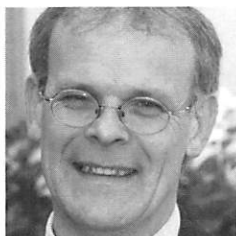
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Interpreting and Transforming the Present Times

The Significance of the Bible for the Liturgy

Ansgar Franz



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In chapter 21 of the Dogmatic Constitution *Dei Verbum* we read: "The Church has always venerated the Divine Scriptures just as she venerates the body of the Lord, since, especially in the sacred liturgy, she unceasingly receives and offers to the faithful the bread of life from the table both of God's word and of Christ's body". In a prominent Latin-German edition of the Council documents, in the 2nd edition of the *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche*, the then Tübingen dogmatic theologian Joseph Ratzinger commented on this expression as follows: "The text [of the Dogmatic Constitution] hereby underscores once again, what was already made clear by the Constitution on the liturgy: (...) that the Church as community of the body of Christ is precisely also community of the *logos*, living from the Word, such that 'flesh' and 'word' are the two ways in which the 'body of Christ', the Word made flesh, approaches us and become our 'bread'. The Constitution on the sacred liturgy *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, to which Ratzinger's commentary alludes, had brought out the significance of the Bible for the liturgy at its very beginning, where it speaks of the essence of the Eucharist (Art. 6f.). In one of the sections devoted to the renewal of the liturgy the explanation is given: "Sacred Scripture is of the greatest importance in the celebration of the liturgy. For it is from Scripture that lessons are read and explained in the homily, and psalms are sung; the prayers, collects, and liturgical songs are scriptural in their inspiration and their force, and it is from the scriptures that actions and signs derive their meaning. Thus to achieve the restoration, progress, and adaptation of the sacred liturgy, it is essential to promote that warm and living love for Scripture to which the venerable tradition of both Eastern and Western rites gives testimony." (SC 24)

In the following pages I would like to illustrate this importance of the Bible for the liturgy, stressed by both Council documents, by way of a concrete example,

namely the story in Daniel 3 that tells of the fate and the song of the three young men in the fiery furnace. The example can serve as an exemplary case study for a number of reasons:

- Firstly: the liturgical tradition knows this biblical story in three fundamental cycles of concrete re-enactment of the Paschal Mystery, namely in a *daily*, a *yearly* and a *lifetime cycle*.
- Secondly: the story, or the motif of the three young men is present in three forms that are fundamental for the liturgy, namely as *reading*, as *song* and as *prayer*.
- Thirdly: besides these formal reasons, the story from Dn 3 also has exemplary value from the point of view of its content, for it issues in the invitation to the praise of God, which is also the goal of liturgy as such. But the Bible does not conceal the fact that the praise the Church offers in this time between Pentecost and Parusia must necessarily be offered in the very midst of the hardships and adversities of this world. Believers form part of creation as a whole, which, as Paul says, is for the present time groaning in labor pains.
- Fourthly: the pericope of Dn 3 provides a suitable example for highlighting a fundamental problem inherent in the current lectionary.

We will treat now briefly three of the places where the biblical story of the three young men is employed in the liturgy.

1. Dn 3 as a reading for the Easter Vigil

In addition to the Lord's Supper on Sunday as a weekly commemoration of the Resurrection of the Crucified, Christians approach the yearly commemoration of the Paschal Mystery by way of an evening vigil, where the initial lighting of the fire is followed by a rather lengthy and ritually embellished Liturgy of the Word. Since the 4th century at the very latest the reading from Dn 3 has been a fundamental constituent of these vigil readings and its use is widespread in most rites of East and West. The following overview shows the order of readings of the Jerusalem and Byzantine traditions as examples for the Eastern Churches, and the Spanish, Galician and Roman traditions as examples for the Western Churches.



The Readings for the Easter Vigil

Orient		Occident		
Jerusalem (5 th century)	Byzantium (8 th century)	Spain (11 th century)	Gaul (7 th /8 th century)	Rome (8 th century)
Gn 1	Gn 1	Gn 1	X	Gn 1
Gn 22	Is 60	Gn 2	X	Gn 5
Ex 12	Ex 12	Is 55	Gn 7	Gn 22
Jon 1-4	Jon 1-4	Gn 5	Gn 22	Ex 14
Ex 14	Jos 5	Ex 13-15	Gn 27	Is 54
Is 60	Ex 13-15	Gn 22	Ex 12	Ba 3
Jb 38	Wis 3	Dt 31-32	Ex 13-15	Ez 37
2 K 2	1 K 17	Gn 27	Ez 27	Is 4
Jer 38	Is 61	Ex 12	Is 1-5	Ex 12
Jos 1	Gn 22	2 Ch 34f	Jos 3f	Jon 3
Ezr 37	Is 61	Ezk 27	Jon 1-3	Dt 31
Dn 3	2 Reg 4	Dn 3	Dn 3	Dn 3
	Is 63			
	Jer 38			
	Dn 3			

The choice and ordering of the Old Testament readings are to a certain degree variable, but there is a common basic stock that belongs to all five of the cited traditions: Gn 1 (the creation), Gn 22 (the binding of Isaac), Ex 12 (the Passover, with the passing over of the slaying angel), Ex 14 (salvation at the Red Sea) and Dn 3. It is noteworthy that all the arrangements place Dn 3 at the end of the vigil liturgy of the Word. The reason for this must be that the procession of the newly baptized from the baptistery to the church originally took place with the final reading and its canticle. So the community would welcome its new sisters and brothers with the assurance that constancy in their confession to God and the praise they render to Him, which might still be taking place in extreme hardship would, in the end, lead to redemption and liberation – in spite of all earthly power and might.

The example shows clearly the dimension of the liturgical reading: the proclamation of the Bible in the liturgy of the Word is not merely the reading of pious stories or the expounding of pertinent themes with the objective of edification and instruction for life, rather it is the anamnestic proclamation of the *mirabilia Dei*, the saving acts of God, as a “now” to be grasped in faith. Through the ritually staged scriptural reading the present time of each celebrating community is identified with the salvation time encoded in the Bible. This biblical salvation time stretches from the Creation to final fulfillment, from Genesis to Apocalypse. The here and now of the community is made present, one could say, to the salvation time of the Bible. This dimension of biblical proclamation is brought to explicit expression in the celebration of the Jewish Passover meal, where after the Haggadah, the recounting of the liberation from the slavery of Egypt, the text

continues: “in every generation every individual should behave in such a way as if *he himself* were being taken out of Egypt, for it is written: ‘and you shall tell your son on that day, ‘It is because of what the Lord did for *me* when I came out of Egypt’ (Ex 13:8). It was not our forefathers alone whom God – God’s holiness be praised! – rescued, but with them God rescued *us too*, for it is written: ‘and he brought you out from there, that he might bring you in and give you the land which he swore to give to your ancestors’ (Dt 6:23).”

Not the three young men alone did the Everlasting deliver from the fiery furnace, but with them he delivered us as well.

2. Dn 3 as canticum of Sunday Lauds

The canticles that are proclaimed as part of the scriptural readings for the Easter Vigil have since the 4th century been given a place in the Church’s daily morning prayer of Lauds. The prayer that occurs when night is coming to an end thus becomes a memorial of Easter night; every morning becomes an anamnesis of Resurrection morning. While the Byzantine tradition provides for the daily recitation of a number of canticles one after another, the Roman tradition divides the canticles among the individual weekdays. Our canticle from Dn 3 thus holds the distinction of being placed on Sundays and feast days: before the psalms of praise (148-150) *Laudate Dominum* one would hear the *Canticum trium puerorum*, *Benedicite omnia opera Domini Domino: laudate et superexaltate eum in saecula*.

Since the canticle was lifted from the Easter Vigil liturgy of the Word the summons to praise is, of course, removed from its context in the story of Daniel; however, the fate of the three young men remains present through the antiphons that surround the canticle. While in the West these tend to be brief and sober – something like: “the three in the fiery furnace cried out as with one voice and sang: Blessed be God” (CAO III Nr. 5176): *Tres ex uno ore clamabant in camino ignis et psalebant: Benedictus Deus* –, the Eastern Church knows more poetically developed forms, such as the following from the Pentecost Canon of Kosmos Monachos: “The three young men, who had been thrown into the fiery furnace, transformed the fiery blaze into dew through the singing of hymns, as they cried out: ‘Blessed are you, Lord, God of our fathers’”.

If in the Easter Vigil the faithful encounter the reading of the three young men as a proclamation of the *mirabilia Dei* whose effects are appropriated by the hearers, at Lauds they approach the canticle of the three young men as a song to be assimilated in an act of meditation. The people praying it must themselves allow the text to arise in song, they must give it a body to sound in, they must bring it to life through the energy of their own



breath. This, too, is an act of actualization: together with the three young men in the fiery furnace the faithful sing, as though they were already liberated. In the act of singing the song of praise the singers are touched by a future, which is grounded in the past. Through the singing voice this future is made present and is thus made manifest: "through their hymn-singing they transformed the blazing fire into dew", as it says in the antiphon of the Eastern Church. Out of their hymn singing, their praise of God, grows a force which transforms the present.

3. Dn 3 as motif in the model prayer for the Liturgy for the Dying

The dying and death of a Christian are together with the burial the last station of his life's Passover or Easter, which had started with his baptism into the death of Christ and is now completed in his own dying, as he crosses over from that world to the Father. Since the earliest times the Church has accompanied this transition by being there for the dying in their hour of need and praying that God will receive his soul. In this connection the story of the three young men must very early have already played an important role, as the widespread use of this motif on sarcophaguses and in catacomb paintings attests.

In the Mass for the Dying there is a prayer whose language is already known from the martyr acts of the ancient Church and which has the following form in the Roman Rituale of 1614:

<i>Paradigms for the prayers for the dying</i>	<i>Readings for the Easter Vigil</i>
Libera, Domine, animam servi tui (ancillae tuae), sicut liberasti	
Heno ch et Eli am de communi morte mundi	
Noe de deluvio	Gn 5
Abraham de Ur Chaldehy	
Job de passionibus suis	
Isaac de hostia, et de manu patris sui Abrahæ	Gn 22
Lot de Sodomis, et de flamma ignis	
Moyses de manu Pharaonis regis Aegyptorum	Ex 14
Danielem de lacu leonum	
Tres pueros de camino ignis et de manu regis iniqui	Dn 3
Susannam de falso crimine	
David de manu regis Saul, et de manu Goliath	
Petrum et Paulum de carceribus	
Et sicut beatissimam Teclam virginem ... de tribus atrocissimis tormentis liberasti ...	

The prayer to God for the salvation of the soul of the dying person is grounded on the salvation action of God

attested to in the Bible, which is rendered concrete in 13 examples (paradigms): may God deliver the soul of the dying from all his suffering as He freed Enoch and Elijah from the fate of earthly death, Noah from the flood, Abraham from Ur of the Chaldees; Job from his sufferings, Isaac from the altar of sacrifice, Lot from the conflagration of Sodom, Moses from the hand of Pharaoh, Daniel from the lions' pit, the three young men from the fiery furnace and from the hand of the godless king, Susanna from the false accusers, David from the hand of Saul and Goliath, Peter and Paul from prison, and finally the martyr Thekla from the three tortures.



Peter Paul Rubens: *Daniel in the Lions' den*, National Gallery of Art, Washington

Here we find the motif of Dn 3 perhaps in the clearest fashion in the dimension of actualizing memory: in a concrete situation, the death of a Christian, the praying community reminds God of His earlier saving acts; the goal of this reminding is that now, too, He will show Himself as the one He has always shown Himself to be, namely as Savior and Liberator.

Four of the eleven Old Testament paradigms, and among these Dn 3, we have already encountered in the readings for the Easter Vigil. The evening of life of the Christian is marked by the vision of resurrection morning.

Our inspection, by way of example, of three places where Dn 3 has found a place in the liturgy of the Church leads us to three different concrete realizations of the Paschal Mystery, namely in the compass of a day, of a year and of a lifetime, and to the reception of the Bible in three different liturgical forms, namely in reading, in song and in prayer. All three places show that the most basic and proper dimension of the Bible in the liturgy is that of anamnesis: the present is qualified as the all-embracing salvation time of God inasmuch as it is identified with the salvation time attested in the Bible. In the liturgical celebration borne by the Holy Spirit, in which communities offer praise to the



Father through His Christ, the past *mirabilia Dei* are made present and the as yet outstanding *mirabilia Dei* are anticipated. At its core, liturgy is the ritually performed anamnesis of Scripture. The Bible, one could pointedly say, is the most important of all liturgical books and the only one that is truly indispensable.



Michelangelo: *The Prophet Daniel (detail)*, Sistine Chapel, Rome

In conclusion I would point to a deficiency in the current reception of the Bible in the Liturgy of the Word. For if one were to put the rule to the test and ask about the present day use of Dn 3 in the liturgy, the results would show that the pericope is indeed employed as a canticle in Lauds and as a motif in the Liturgy for the Dying – a presence, of course, which remains inaccessible to the majority of the faithful – but that it has disappeared as a reading. It has been absent from the Easter Vigil since 1956 as a consequence of the reduction of the vigil readings from twelve to four, and even the *Ordo Lectionum Missae* of 1969 does not have a place for it among the readings for a Sunday or Feast Day. This is all the more surprising, as it was precisely the *Ordo Lectionum* that wished to honor the recommendation of the Council that the treasures of the Bible be opened up more lavishly so that “a richer fare may be provided for the faithful at the table of God’s word” (SC 51). Indeed, with its three-year cycle of readings and its proclamation on all Sundays of an Old Testament pericope it held in store a wealth of Scriptural readings that should not be underestimated. Nevertheless, the lectionary conceals a number of problems connected with the composition and selection procedures for the readings. We might briefly note one of these problems here: on Sundays throughout the year the consecutive Gospel readings are matched by a thematically fitted Old Testament reading. With this selection procedure, under the exclusive guidance of the Gospel thematic, one runs the obvious risk of losing sight of some Old Testament passages that have been

highly valued in the tradition of the Church; besides the story of the three young men (Dn 3), one could mention also the stories of Cain and Abel (Gn 4), of Jacob’s dream of the ladder to heaven (Gn 28) and his fight with God (Gn 32), of Joseph and his brothers (Gn 37f), of David and Goliath (1 Sam 17) and of Daniel in the lions’ den (Dn 6), to name only a few. Other contemporary lectionaries, which originated in dependence on the Roman Ordo, such as the North American *Revised Common Lectionary* (1992), the British *Four Year Lectionary* (1990) or the Reform model “Patmos” (1997), do set the “table of the Word of God” with this “bread” that suffers neglect in our lectionary. I think it is necessary in our Church also to advance further along the way of reform embarked upon with the *Ordo Lectionum Missae*. It would, after all, be a painful loss if these other witnesses of Scripture were to disappear from the memory and consciousness of contemporary communities.

The prophetic power of the story of the three young men in the fiery furnace to interpret and to transform the present seems at times to be more vividly felt outside the walls of the Church than inside the Church vessel. At about the same time that Dn 3 has been dropped as a reading for the Easter Vigil, the motif of the three young men is present to an astounding degree in painting, music and literature. As one example for many we might cite a poem of the German-speaking poet Christine Busta, who draws from the song of praise of the three young men the hope that the song of the persecuted might finally triumph over the persecutors:

*As they were thrown into the furnace
The three young men sang in the fire
The Bible tells us.*

Pablo Neruda relates:

*As Nazim Hikmet, the poet
Was thrown into a cesspool,
He began to sing from the refuse.
The Myrmidons are always ill-advised,
Sometimes the persecuted are as well.
But song is always right.*

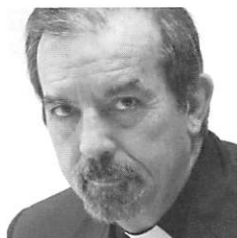
(Translation: L. Maluf)



The End of an Exile

Bible and Liturgy after the Second Vatican Council

Walther Ruspi



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The end of an exile

The vital connection that exists between Bible and liturgy received extensive treatment in the documents of the Second Vatican Council, both in the norms regarding liturgical reform in the *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (SC) and in those devoted to the doctrine on Divine Revelation and its transmission in the Church articulated by *Dei Verbum* (DV). A study of the importance and role of the mutual synergy between Bible and liturgy could well begin with a survey of the teaching of these two "constitutions".

We can say that Vatican II launched what has been called "the end of the exile of the Word", by which is meant a substantial recovery of the presence of Scripture in liturgical action and of the "warm and living" awareness of that Word (cf. SC 24).

More than a mere increase in the "quantity" of Scripture, the objective of the Vatican II reform was above all a "quality" presence of the Word of God in the hearts and lives of believers (DV 8), a profound reception, understanding, awareness and experience of the Word.

Indeed, the Church, and thus each one of us, is asked, with the assistance of the Holy Spirit, to listen to the Word devoutly, to guard it scrupulously and to explain it faithfully (cf. DV 10) so that "by hearing the message of salvation the whole world may believe, by believing it may hope, and by hoping it may love." (DV 1)

SC and DV put forward two general principles: the presence of God and of Christ in Sacred Scripture, when it is proclaimed to God's people, and the intimate connection that exists between the Word of God and the Eucharistic celebration: the twofold table.

The Bible in the liturgy

Among the *General Norms* which are supposed to serve as a guide for the reform of the Sacred Liturgy, a section devoted to "Bible and Liturgy" reads as follows: "Sacred Scripture is of the greatest importance in the celebration of the liturgy. For it is from scripture that lessons are read and explained in the homily, and psalms are sung; the prayers, collects, and liturgical songs are scriptural in their inspiration and their force, and it is from the scriptures that actions and signs derive their meaning. Thus to achieve the restoration, progress, and adaptation of the sacred liturgy, it is essential to promote that warm and living love for Scripture to which the venerable tradition of both eastern and western rites gives testimony." (SC 24)

A little further on, among the norms that derive from the *didactic nature* of the Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium* returns to speak of the presence of the Bible in the liturgy: "That the intimate connection between the rite and the words may be apparent in the liturgy. In sacred celebrations there is to be more reading from Holy Scripture, and it is to be more varied and suitable." (SC 35)

When it comes time then to treat the reform of the Eucharistic Liturgy, the same Constitution recalls the need for a greater biblical richness in the mass: "The treasures of the Bible are to be opened up more lavishly so that a richer fare may be provided for the faithful at the table of God's Word. In this way a more representative portion of the Holy Scriptures will be read to the people in the course of a prescribed number of years." (SC 51)

The point is also made with reference to the reform of the Liturgy of the Hours: "Readings from Sacred Scripture shall be arranged so that the riches of God's Word may be easily accessible in more abundant measure." (SC 92a)

Given the importance of this "source", of this "table" (these are the most frequently recurring images to indicate the biblical spring from which the liturgy draws its principal resources) even the "texts intended to be sung must always be in conformity with Catholic doctrine; indeed, they should be drawn chiefly from Holy Scripture and from liturgical sources." (SC 121)



The fundamental reason for the importance given to the Bible resides in the fact that Christ Himself is “ever made present and active in us especially in the celebration of the liturgy” (SC 35): “He is present in His Word since it is He Himself who speaks when the Holy Scriptures are read in the Church” (SC 7), for “in the liturgy God speaks to His people, and Christ is still proclaiming His Gospel” (SC 33).

The cumulative testimony of these various citations gives us an overall picture of the aim of the Conciliar reform, understood as a threefold gain: to put forward the table of the Word with greater abundance, greater variety, and better choice of readings; to promote a “warm and living” knowledge of Holy Scripture; to translate the texts into the language of the people, without marginalizing Latin (cf. SC 36).

The Bible in the life of the Church

Dei Verbum contains numerous references to the vital pair *Bible and Liturgy*. Speaking of the veneration the Church has always given to the Divine Scriptures, DV remarks that the reason for such veneration resides in the fact that the Scriptures, too, are the “sacramental” Body of Christ just as is the Eucharist; Word and Bread are the same Body of Christ which is offered as nourishment for the faithful. This is the origin of the expression of the Council Fathers on the twofold table: the table of the Word and the table of the Bread. With the same solicitude with which the Eucharistic Bread is offered, the nourishment of the Scriptures should also be offered the faithful “to enlighten their minds, strengthen their wills, and set men’s hearts on fire with the love of God” (DV 23).

The importance of the table of the Word in the liturgical action is so great that a sacramental action is inconceivable without the Liturgy of the Sacrament being preceded by the Liturgy of the Word. With reference to the Eucharistic celebration the statement is made: “The mass is composed of two parts, the Liturgy of the Word and the Eucharistic Liturgy; these two are so closely joined together as to form a single act of worship. Indeed, in the mass the table of the Word of God is prepared just as is the table of the Body of Christ, so that the faithful may go to them for instruction and nourishment” (*Principi e norme per l’uso del Messale Romano* 28).

Without wishing to exclude the private reading and assiduous study of Scripture, liturgical proclamation is the privileged place where the faithful can draw on “the abundant wealth of the Divine Word” (DV 25). The homily plays a special role here, provided that those who offer to the people of God this “primary charity” are themselves first nourished by the “excellent knowledge

of Jesus Christ” (Phil 3:8) so that none of them will become “an empty preacher of the Word of God outwardly, who is not a listener to it inwardly” (DV 25, quoting St. Augustine).

The Church looks to Scripture as the “nurturer and rule” of faith. “And the force and power in the Word of God is so great that it stands as the support and energy of the Church, the strength of faith for her sons, the food of the soul, the pure and everlasting source of spiritual life” (DV 21). For this reason “easy access to Sacred Scripture should be provided for all the Christian faithful” and great care should be taken to insure the availability of suitable and accurate translations of the original texts in the various languages (cf. DV 22).

A deeper understanding for our time

The difficulty of reading the Scriptures

Alongside the generally positive assessment, there is one weak trait in liturgical practice or in the pastoral implementation of these directives that should be noted. There are a number of questions¹ that can convey a tendency to “trivialize” the sacred text, in spite of subjective intentions that might appear to have a pastoral motivation.

Why read the Word of God in our assemblies? Why put it forward such as it is, if the texts themselves were written in times that are so far from our own? Why not offer a paraphrase, omitting everything that resists immediate comprehension?

Today, in a literate society, why do we still listen to the Word proclaimed when reading it would provide more direct access? Should we be hearing or should we be reading? Should we listen to Scripture from a recording? Why not employ a technically perfect recording, an audio-visual reading, rather than resort to a reading that sometimes fails to readily communicate?

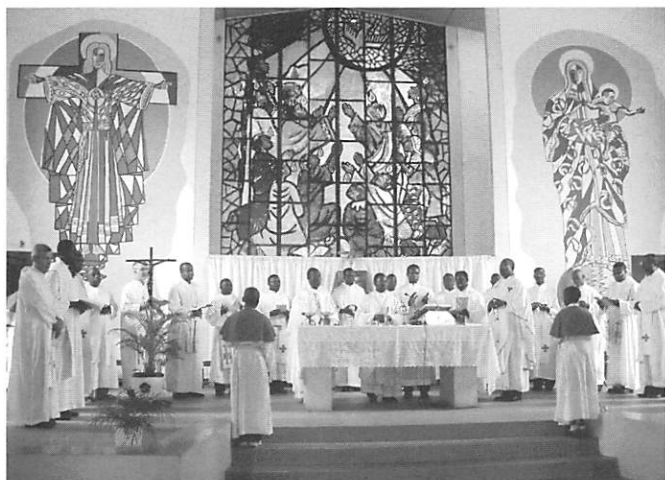
The questions may seem trivial, but the conciliar documents give a first response regarding the desired type of proclamation and hearing when they assert that in the “proclamation” the “living” presence of the Word, as Word of God, is actualized.

“By listening to the Word of God the Church is built up and grows, and the marvelous deeds that God accomplished in times past and in many ways in the story of salvation are made present in mystical truth, in the signs and symbols of the liturgical celebration; in His turn, God makes use of the very assembly of the faithful who are celebrating the liturgy for the diffusion and glory of His Word and so that His name may be exalted among the nations” (*Ordo Lectionum Missae* 7).



The Sacramentality of the Word

The Word of God is present in fullness in the liturgical proclamation that takes place before the Church. The written Word exists as document, the Word proclaimed in assembly exists as relational Word, living Word, because even as it proceeds from the mouth of God, thanks to the ministry of reader, it reaches the ear and the heart of the assembled people.



Liturgical reading is a quasi-sacramental actualization of the Word of God. In the proclamation a twofold dynamic presence comes into being: God comes down with his Word into our today, and at the same time we are introduced anew to the eternal presence of God who speaks. The eternal Word enters into relationship with us and comes down into our today where it effectively nourishes us.

The Word of God is a word that precedes every move of ours, because God always has the initiative. God initiates a dialogue; we are summoned by God, who turns to us with his whole love story: the revelation of God to Israel in history, the narration of His wonderful deeds and of His plan of salvation for all of humanity, which is fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth, the Word incarnate.

Together with the proclamation comes the actualization, which finds an effective explication in the ecclesial ministry, as well as through the possible and indeed normal complement of the proclamation: the homily.

The solemnized reading of the Word of God and its veneration

The entrance of the eternal Word into our today takes place in such a way that an ambiance of *theophany* is created. God speaks again to His people, and the audience is told to "remove their sandals".² God speaks through the ministry of reader, opens his mouth and in full freedom makes His Word coincide with that of his witnesses. But this requires that the prayer of epiclesis be not lacking, because it is the Spirit who is at work.

The foreword of the *OLM* points out three perspectives which enable us to understand the meaning of the veneration of the Word of God: celebrative space, the proper ministers and the rites that shape the celebration.

Celebrative space: the pulpit, as an elevated, stable, decorous place, designed to facilitate hearing, properly situated with respect to the altar, should clearly suggest that the mass involves the preparation of the table of God's Word as well as that of Christ's Body (*OLM* 32).

The ministers: lector, psalmist, deacon, who should be adequately prepared by both a spiritual and technical formation, with a twofold instruction in Bible and in liturgy (*OLM* 55).

The rites of the celebration of the Word: the beauty of the Gospel book (*OLM* 35-37), the processional accompaniment, the mode of proclaiming, the kissing of the Gospel Book and the sign of the cross, the acclamations that amount to professions of faith (*OLM* 17).

Finally, of decisive value for the efficacy of the reading, is the prayer of epiclesis, where the action of the Spirit is manifested.

The *OLM* 9 asserts: "Because the Word of God truly effects in human hearts what has resounded in human ears, the action of the Holy Spirit is required. Under his inspiration and with his help the Word of God becomes the foundation of the liturgical action, and norm and sustenance of the whole of life".

We thus have the loftiest context for the solemnized proclamation, which, with its accompaniment of explanatory signs, gives central place to the sign of the Word, or for the "precious" Gospel Book by which we make visible that word which only the Spirit can help us understand and accept as Word of God.

In the various liturgical traditions: Catholic, Orthodox, Reform (...) the prayer that invokes the presence of the Holy Spirit precedes the proclamation of the Gospel. It is an epicletic action.

- In the liturgical tradition of the Latin Catholic Church, prior to the proclamation of the Gospel, the deacon who asks for the blessing is blessed by the priest with these words: "May the Lord be in your heart and on your lips, that you might worthily proclaim His Gospel. In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit".
- The Byzantine liturgy prays: "O Lord, lover of mankind, let the pure light of your divine knowledge shine in our hearts; may it open the eyes of our mind, that we may comprehend your evangelical statements".



- In the liturgical tradition of the Reformed Church, the pastor, before he begins to preach, asks “of God the grace of His Holy Spirit, so that His Word might be faithfully expounded to the honor of His name and to the edification of the Church, and that it might be received in humility and obedience, as is right”.

Again in the reformed liturgy we find this splendid prayer, inspired by the *Imitation of Christ*:

Lord, we thank you for having gathered us into your presence, to reveal to us your love and subject us to your will. Reduce to silence in us any other voice that is not your own. And that we may not find our condemnation in your Word, heard and not received, known and not loved, heard and not put into practice, open our minds and our hearts to your truth through your Holy Spirit, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Finally, in the Latin liturgy, the blessing of a new ambo, or pulpit is accompanied by the following words:

O God, who have called us out of darkness into your own wonderful light, we owe you our thanks at all times. You satisfy the hunger in our hearts with the sweet nourishment of your word. When we gather together in this church you remind us again and again of your wondrous words and works. We pray that in this church we may listen to the voice of your Son, so that, responding to the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, we may not be hearers only but doers of your word. Grant that those who proclaim your message from this lectern may show us how to direct our lives, so that we will walk in the ways of Christ, following him faithfully until we reach eternal life.



Conclusion

I stress, in conclusion, these two theological and pastoral emphases which present themselves today as we revisit the Conciliar Constitutions that speak to us of the Bible and the liturgy: the epicletic dimension in proclamation, or the indispensable work of the Holy Spirit which insures that the biblical Word might be Word of God for us; the actualization of the Word in our today, for a total reception of the biblical text in its original freshness and vitality, so that it speaks to our personal story, lived in the faith of the Church.

(Translation: L. Maluf)

¹ Cf. C. Giraudo, *Stupore eucaristico. Per una mistagogia della Messa alla luce dell'enciclica Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, Vatican City 2004, p. 60.

² J.-J. von Allmen, *Celebrare la salvezza. Dottrina e prassi del culto cristiano, spec. La proclamazione della Parola di Dio*, Torino 1986, p. 109.

BDV 84/85: Corrigendum

On page 37 – “New Members: Irish School of Evangelisation (ISOE)” – the text should read:

“(…) ISOE has its roots in Charismatic Renewal and presents in Ireland and abroad retreats, courses, presentations and seminars on the ‘New Evangelisation’ to priests, religious and laity, with an emphasis on biblical pastoral ministry.”



Word of God – Source of Reconciliation, Justice And Peace

A few Reflections on the Theme of the Seventh CBF Plenary Assembly

Alexander M. Schweitzer, CBF General Secretary

The theme of the Seventh CBF Plenary Assembly is a multifaceted one. It is an African theme, it is a biblical theme, and it is also a CBF theme. Hence, I would like to share here a few possible aspects of this theme with you – as a small appetizer for our upcoming Plenary Assembly.

“Reconciliation, justice and peace” is ...

... an African topic

This is why the upcoming Special Synod for Africa (2009) will be dedicated to precisely this theme. Africa provides us with both the salvific and the horrific aspects of this issue. There are many splendid and encouraging examples of reconciliation processes in various African countries well known to us. The motors and promoters of these processes are often persons or groups deeply committed to and motivated by Christian values, the logic of love, of forgiveness and by a biblical notion of justice. This justice does not simply build on an idea of sheer equality and even less on a system of revenge. It is not justice according to man but justice coming from God. A justice which considers all humankind His children and hence brothers and sisters, adorned with the same dignity and the same need of forgiveness and redemption, and a justice which has a special faible for the weak.

But Africa also provides the horrific aspects of the absence of justice and peace, of the presence of hatred, the logic of revenge and death. Superfluous to quote individual places, nations, actors here; many of them are all too well known. Undoubtedly, many external factors, forced upon Africa, play a role here: economical discrimination through controlled markets and detrimental trade agreements; several structural realities which make life and living together in Africa not easy are (still) consequences of the colonial times. Globalization in the long run might hold great chances for Africa but for the time being it seems that it causes at least as much marginalization and disadvantages. Poverty, starvation, mortality rates are scandalous, since where they exist they are intentional, or at least tolerated. There would be enough – and cheap enough – water, food, medicine etc. for everyone in this small world. Violence and provoked death are scandals, and not seldom the world watches without intervening.

These observations, however, should not distract our attention from the fact that quite a few of the factors foster-

ing a culture of injustice, hatred and death, are “African-made”. In this connection one may ponder on the value of life in Africa, or may point at the concept and concrete realization of leadership which all too often allows an individual to usurp and abuse power (the traditional African chief or king was surrounded by more mechanisms of control than some of today’s African leaders are willing to accept). The scourge of violence and death which is raging in so many places on this beautiful continent is often caused by the absence of values and the systems to protect them. This fact for us Christians points to the foundations of our faith, at the questions of our Christian values and, ultimately, of our relationship to God. Some years ago an African archbishop told me: Our challenge in Africa is not the numeric growth in Christians, or the spreading of Christianity, it is rather the quality of our faith, the deepening and rooting of the Good News in our African cultures.

Biblical pastoral ministry in Africa today finds itself vis-à-vis with this great challenge!

... a biblical topic

Justice and peace are profoundly biblical themes. God’s justice and the peace granted by Him is a recurring theme, mostly in the Old Testament (justice is mentioned 165 times; peace 323 times), and especially in the Pentateuch, the Prophets (cf. Is), the Psalms, not to forget Job. Justice is seen as a prerogative of peace (cf. Ps 10:18).

By doing justice you “keep the way of the Lord” (Gn 18:19), and he who does not follow God’s way perverts justice (1 Sam 8:3). Justice is not an easy thing to obtain, *ex cathedra iudicis*. Justice requires courage (Ex 23:2). Ultimately it is the Lord who works justice. He does this first and foremost for the weak and needy (orphans, widows, strangers, cf. Dt 10:18; 27:19; Ps 82:3 etc.) and for all who are oppressed (Ps 103:6). Food, the just claim to access of existential goods, the right to live safely, to be integrated in society etc. are matters of the justice of the Lord, of justice in the biblical sense. “Rescue the oppressed, defend the orphan, plead for the widow” (Is 1:17)!

The theme of “justice” runs through the Book of Job like a golden thread. Job’s existential struggle reveals how inscrutable the Lord’s justice can be – but precisely this justice is essential to the Almighty (cf. Psalms, Rom 3:5).



Justice in a full sense exists only in the Lord, meaning that justice among man can unfold in this full sense only if it has a reference to the One who in His endless love is the only just One.

The theme of reconciliation is mainly found in the Pauline letters in the New Testament, and in Pauline theology reconciliation is used in the Christological sense. God has reconciled the world through His Son, Jesus Christ. This model shows us that unselfishness, obedience towards God, unconditional love of God and our neighbour are the ingredients for reconciliation, justice and peace. Only thus the Word of Life will prevail over the words of hatred and death.

... a CBF topic

The Catholic Biblical Federation from its very beginnings distinguishes itself by its explicit concern for the concrete reality, for the context, for the life-relevancy of its endeavours. It has never limited itself to theoretical reflection alone; its biblical ministry has always been pastorally-orientated ultimately focussing at grass-roots' level.

Justice, biblical justice, is concrete, affects everyday life, is not easy to gain or to realize. Justice (as well as reconciliation and peace) needs to be operated, needs operators, cf. Psalm 14(15):2: *וְעֹשֵׂי צֶדֶק* / καὶ ἐργαζόμενος δικαιοσύνην / et operatur justitiam. Matthew's Gospel with its Sermon on the Mount, one of the key texts of the Plenary Assembly, also stresses the importance of actively promoting justice and peace (e.g. Mt 3:15: οὕτως γὰρ πρέπον ἐστὶν ἡμῖν πληρῶσαι πάσαν δικαιοσύνην).

A quick glance at the Final Statements of the last three CBF Plenary Assemblies serves to underline this CBF reality:

The Bogotá Final Statement (1990) postulates that "the Bible must become a book for the world because we cannot understand the Bible without the human reality in need of salvation, nor can we understand the human reality without the Bible. Looking at the world of today we realize that it is a world which suffers from injustice, exploitation and inequality". And in the following it lists

some of the expressions of the state of the world, as, for example, the growing economic gap between north and south, between rich and poor, the exploitation of the resources of the so-called "third world", the injustices of patriarchal and sexist systems, the violation of human rights, racial discrimination and national conflicts, the evils of social systems that use political power to oppress the people and which produce victims (cf. 6.2).

The Hong Kong Final Statement (1996) underlines that in a changing world "biblical pastoral ministry cannot remain the business only of religious people, something carried on only within the Church community. It needs to bring the Good News into conversation with all areas of life, so that women and men can come to experience and confess that the presence of God, made visible in Jesus, can bring salvation and liberation, peace and reconciliation to the whole world" (cf. 5.3.3)

And the latest Final Statement from our Plenary Assembly in Lebanon (2002) has among its list of priorities for 2002–2008 the development of biblical pastoral material which "takes into account the particular social and cultural situations of the different groups of the world population and which will help them to participate in the construction of a world in which justice, peace and mutual respect contribute lastingly to human development." (4.1.)

The theme of reconciliation, justice and peace is truly a CBF theme!

Justice and peace need to be "operated", to be brought to realization through hard work by operators of justice, fulfilled with God's justice and peace. Reconciliation needs to be cultivated by reconciled men and women, reconciled with God and with themselves. The deepening of our faith, called for by the above mentioned African archbishop, and the continuing conversion of our hearts are conditions *sine qua non* in order to be operators of justice, peace and reconciliation. The Sermon on the Mount can well be read as a characterization of such operators of peace. What a challenge and what a program for us! Love is the breeding-ground on which the tender plants of reconciliation, justice and peace can prosper; God's love – our love, nothing less. ■





Catholics and Catholic Faith in Africa

Facts and Information

In Africa there has been a marked increase in the number of Catholics, especially in the former colonial territories of France and Belgium. As late as 1955, the number of Catholics in the whole of Africa amounted to no more than 16 million, according to the Church's own statistics. But with the growing possibilities that passenger-carrying air transport offers, missionaries on the continent were able to reach those regions that were inaccessible to them before because of their remoteness. By the year 1978 the number of African Catholics climbed to 55 million. Today there are about 140 million. The American journalist John Allen expresses the spread of the Catholic faith in mathematical terms: "from 1900 to 2000 the number of Catholics in Africa rose from 1.9 million to 130 million. This corresponds to a growth rate of 6,708 % [sic!]. Never before in the two-thousand-year-old history of the Church has Catholicism spread so rapidly on one single continent". Today, every eight practising Catholic on earth is an African, and if the number of Catholics on the continent continues to rise, then by the year 2025, there will be 230 million, that is, every sixth Catholic will be African.

The ecclesiastical structures have continued to develop proportionately. Already today, there are 426 bishops and over 27,000 priests in Africa. Furthermore, the situation as regards vocations is far less critical than it is in most parts of Europe and North America even though there is still a great need for priests in these countries. The spread of the Catholic faith can be illustrated, however, by the example of numerous countries, for instance, in the case of Tanzania. Here the number of Catholics rose by 419 % in the period 1961–2000 while simultaneously ecclesiastical structures were being firmly established. In the year 2000 there were four ecclesiastical provinces and 29 dioceses; in eight of these dioceses Catholics make up the majority in the population.

While in 1965 less than a quarter of all Tanzanian bishops were of African origins, since 1998 all dioceses are being led by Africans. In the 1960s, in many of the new national states more and more archdioceses were being occupied by Africans. At the papal election of 2005, eleven of the 115 cardinals in the conclave were Africans.

Baptism statistics are also very revealing for those regions with the highest number of baptisms recorded are also those with the most dynamic growth. Of the total 18 million registered Catholic baptisms for the year 1999, there were alone in Central and South America eight million and no less than three million in Africa. Today, in Nigeria and in the Democratic Republic of the Congo respectively, there are more baptisms registered than in the traditional Catholic countries such as Italy, France, Spain and Poland, which are, even today, still thought of as being strongholds of Catholicism.

Noteworthy is that in Africa 27 % of all baptised people are adults. Among observers this statistic is an important indicator and it is taken to be a sign that efforts to evangelise are succeeding as it shows that people are taking a conscious decision to turn their backs on another religious tradition. By the year 2025 the proportion of Africans and Latin Americans taken together will amount to some 60 % among Catholics. The European and Euro-American Catholics will form only a minor part of a Church that will be dominated by Mexicans, Vietnamese and Congolese, however, that part of the Church – the North – will still be bearing an overproportionate financial burden. The sociologist Rogelio Saenz makes this prognosis: "Between 2004 and 2005 it is estimated that the number of Catholics will rise between 146 % in Africa, 63 % in Asia, 42 % in Latin America and the Caribbean, and 38 % in North America. Meanwhile, the number of Catholics in Europe over the same period will sink by 6 %." In the third decade of the 21st century the number of Catholics in Africa will have matched the number of European Catholics and by the mid-century the number of Catholics in Asia will be numerically almost as many as the number of Catholics in Europe. What is certain is that the end of the twentieth century marks the end of the dominance of the white races in the Catholic Church: Europe is not the Church; rather, it is Latin America which is.

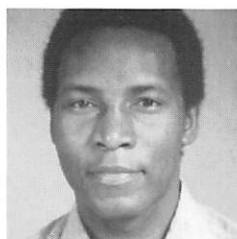
See hereto: Lecture by Philip Jenkins, "Trends in Global Christianity: Implications for the New Evangelization" given at the international congress WeltMission, held by the German Bishops' Conference from May 2–4, 2006 at Freising, Germany.

(Translation: CCFM News)



Jumuiya Ndogo Ndogo Small Christian Communities in Tanzania

Titus Amigu



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A short history

After the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965) doors were opened and the Spirit of God brought a new Pentecost with the introduction of Small Christian Communities in Africa (Swahili: *Jumuiya Ndogo Ndogo*). In Tanzania, the Tanzania Episcopal Conference (TEC) in its 1977 Plenary Session reviewed the feasibility of setting up Small Christian Communities in the country as proposed and agreed upon in AMECEA meetings (Association of Member Episcopal Conferences of Eastern Africa). The bishops emphasized that it would be a matter of top priority for the region's coming years. They, therefore, drew up clear guidelines for implementation and agreed on elements concerning Small Christian Communities in the country. They proposed and established a certain uniform plan without ignoring possible differences resulting from the local environment and circumstances found in the varying and vast dioceses.

The present priorities in deeper evangelization lay emphasis on the development of vibrant Small Christian Communities in every parish and diocese. Right now, many parishes and dioceses can claim to have achieved much since AMECEA declared Small Christian Communities a priority in pastoral work.

Reasons for the priority

There are sound sociological and theological reasons for establishing Small Christian Communities in Tanzania. First, they square with the phenomenon of neighborhood. Frankly speaking, many of the activities of the Small Christian Communities are, in one way or another, an extension or perfection of neighborliness. This is very true of shared prayer, of care for the sick and of concern for issues related to justice and peace and the integrity of creation. In Africa, and thus in Tanzania, neighborhood is the immediate field of activity, the immediate context, of the Small Christian

Community. The Small Christian Community is not expected, in the very first place, to care for community at a higher or more remote level than its own neighborhood. In this way, it is the Church of the neighborhood.

Tanzania, like other African countries, is attempting to live an adapted christology and ecclesiology. It is attempting to live christology and ecclesiology developed and based on a correlation of the Church's tradition and the African culture. As such, the country seeks a christology that draws on African culture, speaking of Jesus as healer, Jesus as ancestor, Jesus as neighbor, Jesus as a suffering servant, in the sense of helping and sharing aspect, as well as Jesus as liberator, in the sense of transformer as far as justice, reconciliation and peace are concerned.

As for ecclesiology, Tanzania seeks one which draws on African culture, meaning one which takes into consideration the centrality of healing ministries, Church as a family of God, in the sense of considering family as an important unit in the African social set up, Church as communion, Church as servant, Church as participation and finally Church as liberation.

Aims of Small Christian Communities

The Small Christian Communities being the present pastoral focus, the dioceses aim at helping the members of these to live the Gospel in the actual context of their lives and to reach out in witness and service in their neighborhood and wider society. This targets at making the parishes and dioceses to be communities of believers centering their life and prayer on Christ and on the Eucharist, being a sign of His actual presence to all in society by compassion and love, showing specific concern for the poor and marginalized, ready to adopt to the changing needs of the people building on their traditions and cultures, and actively witnessing to Christ's love through these Small Christian Communities.

This is to say, it is the ambition of all dioceses to enable the Small Christian Community members to live their Christian commitment. For this, the Small Christian Community can be seen as a communion of believers meeting together and witnessing to the Word of God, trying to check and bridge their differences which may arise in day-to-day social living, economic



status and varied cultural backgrounds. Briefly speaking in the wider African context, it is a community which is living, hence “a way of being”, with a call to help, share and witness to its members in the context of African culture as referred to in the document *Ecclesia in Africa* from the African Synod. In this respect, the Small Christian Communities are again to be the way of living as well as of realizing African christology and ecclesiology. As such the Small Christian Communities aim is to help the parishes and dioceses in creating active participation and sharing.

Present situation

Now, almost throughout Tanzania, the structure of Small Christian Communities has taken root in parish centers, outstations, local village community centers and catechetical centers and religious institutions where celebrations of the Eucharist and the Word of God take place.

In big towns and cities, there is an additional goal. In such settlements, the Church ought to encourage deeper evangelization in these Small Christian Communities and help each member to feel at home in an expansive, understandable and acceptable culture. Mwanza, Mbeya and Dar es Salaam are some of the big urban settlements.

Let us take Dar es Salaam as a special example. This is the biggest city of Tanzania estimated to cover about 162 km² (62.7 sq mi) with a population of around four million. Christian presence can not be challenged – it is a fact – and Dar es Salaam itself is an archdiocese. Within the city center and outskirts there are 50 parishes with numerous outstations and about 2,100 Small Christian Communities. Most Dar es Salaam residents are from rural areas. Thus, mingling of peoples is daily routine. Observers note that the population is increasing by 8 % each year with approximately 850 people immigrating to the city from the rest of the country every day. Consequently, the Small Christian Communities of Dar es Salaam are a special mixture of ethnic groups and languages. In short, most Christians who are from outside Dar es Salaam have different outlooks and backgrounds depending on the situations and environment in which they were brought up. Obviously, mutual acceptance, tolerance and solidarity pose special challenges to all Christians of Dar es Salaam's Small Christian Communities.

Today most of the Small Christian Communities in Dar es Salaam are pastoral models as in most parts of East African countries. We would like to underline that particular model developed within the parish structures where the parish is a “communion of small communities”. Paradoxically, Small Christian Communities in Dar es Salaam are found in three situations – urban, rural and rural-urban. The common urban model

usually groups people who live together in an apartment house or a row of houses or a worker's housing project. By the common rural model we refer to a communion of extended families in the same neighborhood or geographical area.



Achievements in the dioceses

With the help and influence of Small Christian Communities many Tanzanian dioceses have achieved the following:

- In the meantime more than 10,000 Small Christian Communities have been established.
- Numerous invalid marriages have been rectified or regularized.
- Many broken marriages have been reconciled and reinstated.
- Considerable numbers of lapsed Catholics have been brought back to the sacraments.
- There is an encouraging increase in Sunday attendance and Church communion.
- There is successful mediation in many cases of injustice, quarreling and the like.
- Consolidation of unity has been brought about in prayer and religious instruction.
- There are an ever-increasing number of celebrations of the Eucharist.
- An increase in the celebrations of mass and Christian burial services has taken place.
- There has been an increment in teamwork activities such as meeting of costs of necessary needs of the priests and catechists, construction of churches and parish houses for the priests.



Small Christian Communities and Bible study

Taking into consideration the words of St. Jerome echoed over and over again: "Ignorance of the Bible is ignorance of Christ" Bible-study is taken seriously in the Small Christian Communities and people are encouraged to read and study the Bible and attend Bible seminars.



There is a book prepared by the Tanzania Episcopal Conference called *Najifunza Biblia Takatifu Hatua za Mwanzo* ("Learning the Holy Bible in its Early Stages") intended to help the members of Small Christian Communities to know, understand and appreciate the truth about the origin and the message of the Bible. In the book, readers also find different approaches and methods on meditation on the Word of God, among them the Lumko-method. Apart from using the Bible, as we have already mentioned there are seminars on Bible-sharing or Bible-study in these Small Christian Communities. Such seminars focus on informing the participants about the importance of knowing and being familiar with the contents of the Bible, starting with the number and names of the books therein.

In every diocese, the pastoral council recommends that all meetings in the parish should be opened by a reading from the Bible. This practice has been started and is being promoted everywhere. Bible-study sessions help all attendees to lead the other members in their respective Small Christian Communities in Bible-sharing which has become livelier and very much related to people's situations. What is more, Catholics are finding it more and more natural to carry their Bibles to church for their daily and Sunday liturgies as they can now recognise the readings at mass in their Bibles more easily than before. Again, more and more families are now using their Bibles following a challenge from non-Catholics who laugh at Catholics for leaving their Bibles in the bookshelves. People are encouraged to switch off their television screens and ask for silence in order to read the Bible in their homes just as

when silence is demanded by the head of the family to listen to the news on the radio or watch the news on the television.

Many Small Christian Communities are aiming at making the Word of God become alive and so let it turn into a true lamp at their feet (cf. Ps 119:105). With such eagerness reading the Bible, Bible-sharing and even finding cross-references are becoming easier. The goal to be reached is for the members of families, Small Christian Communities and the parish to evangelize themselves, thus enabling people to live the Gospel in action as the Word takes root in their hearts.

The Bible is an asset and a treasure and ought to be at the disposal of all families in the established Small Christian Communities. It must serve as a unifying tool across national and continental borders. In fact, this need is being answered to a certain extent in Tanzania as more than 250,000 Bible copies have been sold at subsidized prices in the recent years.

Shortcomings

The fact that nowadays a lull can be observed in some dioceses cannot be denied. Though the Small Christian Communities remain the backbone of the Church and a priority in the various dioceses, the first enthusiasm has, to some extent, eroded. Of course, arising problems in Small Christian Communities differ from one place or diocese to another, depending upon the urban or rural population. With people of different religions living together, there are pockets of both religious harmony and disharmony and the social infrastructure has many effects. Most people in a neighborhood are physically near to each other, but they can paradoxically live a very isolated and individualistic way of life.



Lack of Bible-knowledge poses a problem to many of the Small Christian Community members. The way they fail to read and share scriptural readings says all.



More than that, attendance is unbalanced. Recent observation indicates that something like 75 % of the Small Christian Community members are women. Men and the youth are struggling against rapid economic and social changes and challenges. Consequently, they lack time and interest to sit down with God and they seem to trust in themselves more than in God.

Some recommendations for curbing the shortcomings

Recommendations to be carried out through the Small Christian Communities include:

- Help parents to become more aware of and more interested in the importance of Small Christian Communities. They should encourage and motivate their children to participate in Bible-reflection and other relevant prayer groups. With great conviction and interest themselves they should send their children for preparation courses to receive the sacraments and to learn about the Bible.
- Train the youth on how to establish and coordinate Small Christian Communities and instruct them in special seminars and courses.
- Organize special courses and seminars on the sacraments, prayers and Bible-knowledge.
- Encourage men and the youth to participate in the life of the Small Christian Communities.

Despite the shortcomings we can truly state, in general, that in Tanzania, Christian Communities offer a promising future and a better Christian outlook. They are of great support to the parishes and dioceses.

The Year of Small Christian Communities

July 2007 to July 2008 has been declared "The Year of Small Christian Communities" in Tanzania. It is the thirtieth anniversary celebrating the date when they officially started to function (1977). The year has been officially inaugurated by holy masses said in different dioceses, parishes and institutions. To celebrate it, the Small Christian Communities are being motivated to continue functioning, the dead ones are being revived, the slumbering ones are being reawakened and, where none existed before, they are being established.

Conclusion

In conclusion, therefore, we must make Small Christian Communities active, the Small Christian Community meetings must continue combining prayers, scriptural readings, social action and cultural adaptations so as to bring the message of Christ home in the best way understandable and enjoyable by Tanzanians and other Africans. This will facilitate the duty of witnessing Christ among all human beings. With necessary cultu-



ral adaptations, the Small Christian Communities become part of their people, and are typical witnesses to the Christian faith. With serious scriptural sharing and witnessing to the Word of God based on the peoples' culture, by helping each other in all social, economic and spiritual realms for the improvement of the members' lives, not only would active participation increase but also the realization of the visions and aims of our dear Church would be carried out as far as more profound evangelization is concerned. ■



Significance and Purpose of Small Christian Communities

From the message of the AMECEA bishops from the Seventh AMECEA Plenary Assembly held in Zomba, Malawi, in August 1979

(...) 2. (a) Small Christian Communities are means by which the Church is brought down to the daily life and concerns of people to where they actually live. In them, the Church takes on flesh and blood in the life situations of people. In them, people are enabled to recognize the mystery of Christ among them, "Emmanuel", God with us. In them, Christians experience the joy and freedom of the forgiveness of their sins, in Baptism and Penance, and they are "made alive" in Jesus Christ, in an environment of fraternal love and of personal faith. In them, they can truly experience the Church as a new way of being together, and it is in them that they are saved in hope. (...)



3. (a) The size of a Small Christian Community is variable, depending on local conditions and on the natural community on which it must be built. In some cases, an "out-station" might be of a suitable size to form a small community, but often the "out-station" itself is too big. What really matters is that the community should have enough members and a sufficient degree of diversity to allow relative self-reliance and a fair variety of charisms, but that it should not have so many members that they cannot know each other on a person to person basis. It is the experience of sharing the love of Christ together in a familiar circle that is the defining element of a Small Christian Community, compared with the larger ecclesial groupings of out-

station (usually), parish and diocese (cf. Acts 2:42-47). (...)

(b) Other communities, such as those in schools, movements, professional and interest groups, etc., are also valuable and necessary, but they should be seen as supplementary to the Small Christian Communities described above (...). The Small Christian Community should not be understood as a fringe group, nor a group for a few elite people, nor a group formed for a particular purpose, such as a prayer group, a solidarity, a Catholic action group, a development group, a study group, though these are legitimate and valuable: it is precisely the means by which the one Church is present in each locality, touching the whole life of its members.

(c) In some situations, a Christian community may be formed by the gathering together of a few widely scattered Christians. Geographical proximity, though usually important, is not the defining element of a Small Christian Community.

4. (a) Structurally, the Small Christian Community is the most local unit of the Church. The family is the "domestic church", but of its very nature it has to reach out to other families, and the Small Christian Community is made up of several family groups. Family catechesis is therefore at the heart of the formation of Small Christian Communities.

(b) Since "the ideal way of renewing the parish is to make it a community of communities" (Synod 1977, Proposition on the Parish), small communities together make up the parish; united with the local pastor, they form part of the parish, of the diocese, of the universal Church. It is the ordained ministry (of bishops and priests) which is the link among the communities in time and space, and between them and the universal Church. This role is essential in preserving the ecclesial bond among the communities, but it has to be supported by all the ministries and services of the community, which exist for the up-building of the Church at all levels, particularly in relationships with others, and for the transforming of the world.

5. (a) The Spirit of Christ gives a variety of gifts to Christ's people for the up-building of the community.



(...) There are many gifts but only one Spirit, who unifies all and gives life to all.

(b) If all are really to be enabled to cooperate in this common task, smaller groupings are necessary in the Church. It is usually in smaller groups that everyone is able to play a part, and thus to discover his or her hidden gifts, and to grow to maturity as humans and as Christians (cf. Eph 4).

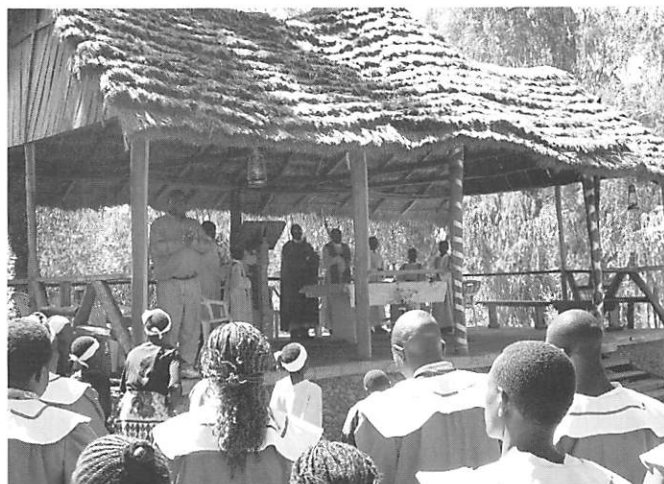
(c) The role of the ordained minister is especially important in this situation, to recognize, encourage, and coordinate the various gifts of the Spirit, and, where necessary, to discern their authenticity, being cautious, however, never to quench the Spirit. The ordained priesthood and the general priesthood of the faithful are in collaboration, not competition. (...)

(d) Lay people have their special role in the task of transforming the world in Christ, but also in the Church's apostolic mission. "The laity derive the right and duty to the apostolate from their union with Christ the head" (*Apostolicam Actuositatem* 3). "Let the spiritual shepherds (...) encourage lay people so that they may undertake tasks on their own initiative. Attentively in Christ, let them consider with fatherly love the projects, suggestions and desires proposed by the laity. (*Lumen Gentium* 37).

(e) Young people are full members of the Christian community, and their rights and insights are to be respected. They are not just objects of the word of God, or mere passive receivers: they should be given responsibility in Church matters, especially in what concerns them more directly. It is sometimes good for them to form their own Church youth councils, with representation on the parish council and other bodies; and involvement in development projects can be a specially valuable way of involving their generous commitment in the life of the small community. The small community should represent the various generations, from old to young, and so reflect in microcosm the mystery of the Church in which "there is no longer Jew or Gentile, slave or free, male or female, but all are one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:26-29).

6. Religious men and women have many important roles in the task of forming Small Christian Communities. They should form part of pastoral teams, where possible, and should be given adequate formation and training for pastoral work. A spirit of true teamwork should develop among all pastoral workers, not just for practical reasons, but also in order to express the community dimension of the Church in their life and work: a lived witness of community life speaks louder than words about community.

7. Leaders of the Church must be able to speak from their own experience about living as members of a Christian community. Building Small Christian Communities is a challenging spiritual task, and it calls leaders as well as everyone else to examine their life style and relationships in the Christian community. Skill in human relationships and communication, methods of group prayer, and an openness to dialogue are some of the requirements for genuine renewal of community, as well as a living faith in the triune God whose life we share and in whose image we have been made.



8. The Church's mission of working to "construct a more human world" (John Paul II's speech in Santo Domingo, 1979) means that all Christian communities must be trained to develop a social and political awareness, so that the "signs of the times" may be rightly read and responded to. (...)

9. Small communities also seem to be the most effective means of making the Gospel message truly relevant to African cultures and traditions. By participating in the life of the Church at this most local level, Christians will foster the gradual and steady maturing of the young Church. (...)

10. (a) The key issue is clearly seen by us to be that of formation and training. This applies to all levels of the Church, including bishops, clergy, religious and the laity, particularly the people who exercise the various non-ordained ministries and services. If the pastoral option of building Small Christian Communities is to be really effective, a serious effort has to be made to re-educate clergy, religious and laity according to the authentic principles of Vatican II, especially in ecclesiology. Regular courses, shared by bishops, priests, religious and laity are essential for this, as well as a regular dissemination of appropriate documents and publications. (...)

(b) What has emerged with clarity from our meeting is that Christian communities can only be built with the



collaboration of bishops, priests, religious and laity – all must be convinced, all must be involved. Special training is needed for lay people who exercise their Spirit-given gifts in the Church and the world in specific non-ordained ministries, and such attention will have to be given to the discernment of the necessary ministries and to appropriate training for them. This has assumed a vital place in the effort to build Small Christian Communities. (...)

11. The close relationship between community and ministry means that all formation programmes for leaders must train people to community-oriented leadership. A possible example of this would be to insist that candidates for priestly and religious life should be recommended by their local Christian communities. Similarly, the local community should normally choose its own local leaders, in consultation with the priest.

12. The Word of God is vital for building Christian community. (...) The risen Christ is the center of all Christian community, and he communicates himself in various ways; among these, the Word of God is basic, for, by awakening the response of faith in us, it leads us to a deeper realization of the mystery of Christ among us, our hope of glory. God's Word is creative and effective, and it cuts into our hearts like a two-edged sword,

calling us to conversion and renewal. A community of faith is necessarily a community springing from, and nourished by, the Word of God (cf. *Presbyterorum Ordinis* 4). To avoid the danger of erroneous interpretations of the scriptures, careful guidelines should be drawn up to help in the formation of leaders. The then World Catholic Federation for the Biblical Apostolate (WCFBA), now Catholic Biblical Federation (CBF) can offer much help in this respect. (...)

(Translation: L. Maluf)



ON THE WAY
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SALAAM

WAWATA – a Catholic Tanzanian Womens' Initiative

Wanawake Wakatoliki Tanzania ("Catholic Women of Tanzania"), popularly known as WAWATA, is a unifying body of all Catholic women in Tanzania for the promotion of their contribution and participation towards their own development, in the Church and in society. Established by the Catholic Women of Tanzania in 1972, WAWATA promotes the teaching of the Church to achieve individual and collective spiritual formation and development to uphold and defend Christian education/teaching and values in the modern changing world. WAWATA works closely with all institutions involved in the spiritual formation and evangelization through Small Christian Communities by the promotion of socio-economic empowerment and development to emancipate women from oppression, to enable them to attain equal rights and opportunities in decision-making organs.





In specific terms WAWATA was established with the following aims:

- to unite and support Catholic women in the country as Christian women and citizens who have joined various groups to develop the Church and society;
- to mobilize such women to enable them to collaborate with all other denominations in creating good Christian families all over the country;
- to encourage Catholic women in their struggle for socio-economic development, at the same time recognizing their role and position in the Church to enable them to fulfill their responsibilities, as the Church requires them;
- to empower Catholic women to participate fully in all activities of Tanzania Laity Council, lay associations and organizations from Small Christian Communities, through the parishes, the dioceses and up to national and international levels;
- to mobilize all Tanzanian Catholic women to enable them to participate in various developments and join with the Catholic women around the world in fostering the moral teaching and the ethics of the Catholic Church;
- to educate and mobilize WAWATA members, to enable them to participate fully with all Tanzanian women, in bringing social justice to society. Women are also encouraged to join various women's groups and organizations in the country, which share the values and norms of the Catholic Church.
- As members of the World Union of Church Women's Organizations WAWATA works with all Catholic women in the world towards equality, social development and peace.

The structure of the Catholic Women Organization in Tanzania starts at basic grassroots Small Christian Community level. Several communities are coordinated at village level, villages are coordinated at divisional level, divisions are coordinated at parish level, parishes are coordinated at diocese level, and dioceses are coordinated at national level. At all of these levels WAWATA has a democratically elected leadership elected every three years. At all levels there are councils, and they hold regular meetings to plan, implement and follow up programs and activities. WAWATA is also affiliated to the World Union Of Catholic Women's Organizations (WUCWO) as a full rights member.

Being a church community, WAWATA deals with the integral development of women both physically and spiritually, so that they are able to contribute towards the development of the Church and the community.



Main activities include the following:

- spiritual formation and charity activities
- agriculture
- economic empowerment through credit provision for the income generation in order to give more power to women at grassroots level
- family-life education
- child-care facilities and education
- nutrition and health programs
- women's skills development, vocational training and education for youth, especially girls' education
- environmental programs
- HIV/AIDS-awareness programs
- women's legal rights
- justice and peace
- provision of shelter to refugees.

Work priorities for the years 2006 to 2010 are:

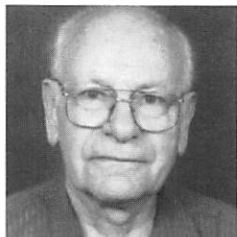
- spirituality for deeper evangelization
- HIV/AIDS programs
- poverty alleviation
- social justice in society (fighting against corruption, violence in the family, instilling morality, etc.

(Information: Oliva Luena, WAWATA-Secretary General) ■



The Word of God in the Mission of the Church

Lucien Legrand



Fr. Lucien Legrand, mep, teaches New Testament at St Peter's Pontifical Institute of Theology and is associate director of the National Biblical Catechetical and Liturgical Centre (NBCLC), both in Bangalore. He was born in France, but has been living in India for more than 50 years. Fr. Legrand is a consultant for several ecumenical translation projects in different Indian languages.

During the Fifth South Asian Workshop of the Catholic Biblical Federation, held in Mumbai, India from January 2–5, 2008 (see hereto the article in this issue of BDV), Fr. Lucien Legrand, mep, held a talk in light of the Lineamenta of the upcoming Synod of Bishops on the Word of God. Fr. Legrand's analysis of the text of the Lineamenta, with special regard to the third chapter, reflects on the present context of the Asian continent. However, many of his thoughts focus on themes of basic interest and meaning also to readers from other countries and regions.

When I was requested to take up the topic of "The Word of God in the Mission of the Church", I accepted all the more willingly since I thought I had my task all cut out for me in the *Lineamenta* sent to the Bishops in preparation for the forthcoming Synod on the Word of God. These *Lineamenta* or guidelines, consisted of three chapters, one on the theology of the Word of God, the second one on the Word of God in the life of the Church and the third one on the Word of God in the mission of the Church.

I. Presentation of the document

So I went through the document and especially this third chapter. I found many good things about the availability of the Word to Christians and non-Christians alike, on the importance of sharing the Word for ecumenism, on the role of the Word of God in inter-religious dialogue, on the link between the Word of God and cultures, and on its impact on society.

I noticed also that the chapter was proportionately short. Counting 3,772 words, it is about 12 % shorter than the previous chapter on the Life of the Church (4,292 words) and almost 50 % shorter than the dogmatic chapter (6,442 words). This betrays a certain abstract character

of the *Lineamenta* which start from theology, mostly on the basis of *Dei Verbum* of Vatican II (quoted 49 times) rather than from the concrete issues of biblical apostolate. For instance, as regards the question of availability of the Word of God, the questions raised by the document concern only Bible distribution without a thought for the far-reaching cultural, dialogical, theological and even political problems raised by the process of translation itself.¹ Concerning dialogue, the document is quite explicit and positive as regards dialogue with Judaism but somewhat defensive concerning other religions ("due care is required", "not to fall prey to syncretism", "attention needs to be given to the purity of the Word of God, authentically interpreted by the Magisterium", III,30). Concerning the impact of the Word of God on society, the *Lineamenta* calls our attention to the "signs of the times" but does not venture into specific questions (III,32).

The point is not to find fault with a text which is meant for the Church at large in its vast intercontinental variety. The Vatican document could only lay theological bases and suggest general orientations. It is up to the Bishops' Synod, representing the rich diversity of ecclesial and human settings to give flesh and bones to those general outlines; it is up to us to identify issues and give precision to those somewhat abstract considerations.

We are therefore invited to take a good look at our South Asian setting. It is complex, as it concerns an enormous block of close to one and a half billion of population showing a great variety. India is not Pakistan, which is not Bangladesh, the three of them differing from Sri Lanka with its own identity, cultures and problems. Within these big blocks we have the complex regional diversity, illustrated for instance recently by the different attitudes of North and South India as regards the Rama Setu². South India has its own specific features different from those of Western Europe, North and South America and so we may attempt to identify general outlines.

II. Development and Poverty

We live in a contrasted context of rapid development and continuing poverty.



Our South Asian countries have entered a period of sustained economic growth exceeding by far the average of the so-called “first world” (India 9 %, Pakistan 6.5 % to 7 %, Bangladesh 5 %; Sri Lanka 5.5 %). The international image has changed. For the world at large, India is no longer a billion of hungry mouths but a huge intellectual capital resource, with the associated fear of jobs being “bangalored.” It is globally reckoned that India constitutes a rich market of some 300 millions of customers having access to the goods of the consumer society. It is one of the constituents of the BRIC (Brazil, Russia, India, China) and Pakistan is listed as ready to join the group. We can but rejoice at this development but we cannot but notice also the issues connected with it. We speak of “materialism”. But this “materialism” has tangible faces: exposure to urban pollution, physical and mental breakdowns due to the stress of long working hours or repeated night shifts, further extended by long drives or rides on congested roads, loss of family cohesion due to urbanization, conjugal and parental tensions, loss of mental bearings, time no longer available for familial, cultural, religious respite, etc. In a certain sense, we could speak of a newly emerging poverty of the rich.



Hence the following questions concerning the impact of the Word of God on this new emerging middle class:

- What is their attitude towards the Word of God?
- Which obstacles prevent them from keeping in touch with the word of God: Materialism? Lack of time? Stress?
- Are they responsive to the appeal of the fundamentalist sects?
- Is their biblical knowledge and familiarity with God's Word on a par with their professional proficiency?
- Are they aware of the challenge of God's Word in their attitude towards the poor (and the woes to the rich)? Does the Word of God prompt them to

engage in the “duty of assisting the birth of (...) liberation [of fellow human beings], of giving witness to it, of ensuring that it is complete”, a task which “is not foreign to evangelization” (*Evangelii Nuntiandi* 30).

- Does the Word of God help them to discover their “poverty” and to respond to it?
- What is being done or can be done to help them to find light and strength in the Word of God?

In the midst of this impressive growth, there remains a still more impressive persistent massive poverty. Saying that in India 300 millions have access to the goods of consumer society implies that another 800 millions are deprived of them. If starvation has become exceptional, malnutrition remains prevalent. 46 % of children suffer from it. Growing urbanization goes along with the multiplication and the enlargement of slums. Access to health care is a problem: sickness is a tragedy in families which subsist from hand to mouth. According to Wikipedia, one fourth of the population lives on less than \$ 0.40 per day. I need not go into details. We can all illustrate this situation with countless examples.

Hence some questions of this type:

- What has the Word of God to do with this situation?
- Have the poor access to the Word of God? In which forms? Especially for the illiterate or poorly literate?
- How do they respond to the Word of God? Does it motivate them to assume and transcend this situation? To join the struggle for liberation from a degrading poverty?
- How do we understand the beatitude to the poor? How do the poor understand it?
- Are they responsive to the appeal of the fundamentalist sects? Urban poor? Rural poor? What attracts them to those sects? What do they find in them that we fail to give them?
- Is the Bible factor of alienation or of liberation for women?

Beyond the societal perspective, there is now a growing awareness of environmental problems. The Bible has been accused of having contributed to the wreckage of the environment by its one sided anthropological emphasis.

- Does the Bible teach to “have dominion” over the earth (Gen 1:28-30)? Or to “till the earth and protect it” (Gen 2:15)?
- Concretely does the Bible encourage its believers to disregard the environment?



- Do our biblical movements show an ecological awareness?

III. Culture

Whatever may be the economic situation of wealth or poverty, our South Indian context is characterized by a rich cultural patrimony. Unlike the case in South America, colonization did not result in a cultural *tabula rasa*. Upheld and nurtured by the rich traditions of Buddhism, Hinduism and Islam, and in spite of the bulldozing influence of modern consuming society, our cultures remain lively. This does not refer only to the “high culture” of refined artistic achievements (though the Taj Mahal or Mahabalipuram belong to all and are frequented by poor and rich alike). It concerns the deepest levels of what gives peoples a sense of identity: language, interaction with landscape, attitude to work and leisure, cooking, feasts, pilgrimages, etc. All this constitutes a rich backdrop to the existence even of the poor. On this respect, we can say that South Asia is one of the richest parts of the world. In this connection, we must recall the words of John Paul II in the encyclical *Redemptoris Missio*.

The Spirit's presence and activity affect not only individuals but also society and history, peoples, cultures and religions. Indeed, the Spirit is at the origin of the noble ideals and undertakings which benefit humanity on its journey through history (cf. *RM* 28).

At the same time, as any human realities, cultures are also ambiguous and can be tarnished by negative values. Here also, there is no need to expatiate upon the ugly distortions of racism, caste-ism, sexism. Names and forms are many of those collective sinful deviations of cultures.

Particularly dominating cultures in a given area may tend to be overbearing which results by reaction to the emergence of counter-cultures. This we find in the Bible itself which is often the expression of a counter-culture: Israel vs Canaan, Prophets vs royal absolutism, Jesus as “marginal Galilean” vs the overly-cultic centralism of Jerusalem. These cultural tensions may end in violence in the various forms which affect our respective countries, especially when the cultural opposition is fuelled by religious fanaticism.

Therefore, the relationship of God's Word to cultures reflects the double aspect of the biblical God: proximity and transcendence, incarnation and prophetic admonition, inculturation and challenge.

As regards inculturation and religious dialogue, the *Lineamenta* propose relevant questions: “Describe any existing experiences of dialogue based on the

Christian Scriptures with those who possess their own sacred books. How can those who do not believe in the divine inspiration of Sacred Scripture come in contact with the Word of God? Does a Word of God exist even for those who do not believe in God? Is the Bible also approached in its character as a ‘Great Code’, which contains richness for all? Describe any experiences of intercultural dialogue which uses the Bible as a reference point. What procedures can be followed to support Christian communities in dealing with the sects?” (questions III,6.)

To that should be added such fundamental questions concerning the inculturation problems underlying the process of translation. What are the intercultural problems met by Bible translators? How do they meet them? Is priority to be given to literal fidelity at the cost of intelligibility or to “dynamic equivalence” at the cost of banality and lack of poetry? The problem was raised acutely in connection with the translation of the lectionary.

Moreover the *Lineamenta* seems to be too angelic when it fails to face the negative and conflictual aspects of cultures. But it is important that the Word of God should face the hard facts of our societies. Hence some questions:

- How is the prophetic challenge of the Word of God perceived vis-à-vis the sinful aspects of cultures such as racism, caste-ism, sexism? Does the Bible function as a factor of alienation or of liberation?
- How are examples of Dalit hermeneutics and other types of exegesis adopting the counter-culture perspective regarded?
- There is a tension between inculturation and challenge, identifying with cultures and being the dissenting voice. What are the principles of discernment that will guide our biblical apostolate?
- A fundamentalist-reading of the Bible, especially of the Old Testament, can be used to justify violence. In fact the Bible has been used to justify racism and colonialism in the name, for instance, of the “Chosen People.” How to read the violent pages of the Old Testament? How to avoid fundamentalist aggressiveness?

Conclusion

The questions raised here connect the agenda of the *Lineamenta* with the theme of the Tanzanian CBF Plenary Assembly on “The Word of God: Source of Reconciliation, Justice and Peace”. The two agendas are not contradictory, but the theme of the CBF assembly is an important complement to the Western and particularly Vatican horizon of the *Lineamenta*. Even within the Vatican horizon, the perspective of the



Lineamenta reveals some limitations. A particular observation may help us to pinpoint the issue. The basic reference of the Vatican guidelines is the Vatican II Constitution *Dei Verbum* on Divine Revelation (1965). It is quoted 49 times in the document. Surprisingly, the more recent document of the Pontifical Commission on *The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church* (1993) is quoted only five times with the consequent surprising emphasis given to the historico-critical method (I,15) and the equally puzzling insistence on a thematic approach to Scripture in seminary teaching (II,23).³ It is true that the Biblical Commission does not have the authority of a Conciliar Constitution. Still, it is a "pontifical" body made up of twenty experts chosen from all over the world and entrusted with a "pontifical" mandate. Its President in 1993 was Cardinal Ratzinger who presented the text to Pope John Paul II.⁴ Some 30 years later than the Council, it takes into account the developments not only of biblical scholarship but of the questions addressed by the signs of the times to biblical scholars.

This one-sided dependence on *Dei Verbum* entails an implicit dependence on the agenda of the Council document which, given its ecumenical outlook, was Church-centered. As said in the prologue of the *Lineamenta*, the Synod intends among its many objectives to help clarify the basic truths of revelation as the Word of God, divine tradition, Bible and Magisterium, to spark an appreciation and deep love of Sacred Scripture, to renew listening to the Word of God in the liturgy and catechesis (Introduction 5).

These were typical issues that Vatican II, and particularly *Dei Verbum*, had to clarify. We must certainly be grateful to it for having set those themes in the heart of Church-life. These issues were mostly ecclesiological. But in the 40 years that followed, other issues have

emerged, more world-centered. God's Word must continue to meet the signs of the times. What is the message of God's Word to a world torn between fundamentalist radicalism and irreligionist rationalism, consumerism and poverty, hedonism and anxiety, racism, caste-ism, sexism, a world manipulated by media, themselves controlled by financial power? Development and liberation, feminism and ecology belong now to the theological and scriptural agenda. This is the topic chosen by the CBF for its Plenary Assembly in Dar es Salaam, June 2008, and consequently for our preparatory meeting. In a way, the biblical landscape now, as described by the PBC document on *Interpretation of the Bible in the Church* depends as much on *Gaudium et Spes*, the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, as on *Dei Verbum*.

We hope that the responses made to the *Lineamenta* and the sharing of the Bishops at the Roman Synod will enlarge the perspectives accordingly and present a message relevant to a world in search of reconciliation, justice and peace.

¹ Cf. L. Legrand, "Translation and Inculturation", in: J.J. Puthenpurackal (ed.), *Going to the Roots. Festschrift in honour of Dr. K. Luke*, Bangalore 2005, p. 195-208.

² Adam's Bridge, or Rama Setu meaning "Rama's Bridge", is a chain of limestone shoals, between the islands of Myanmar near northwestern Sri Lanka and Rameswaram, off the southeastern coast of India. It is generally believed, in the Indian sub-continent, that this structure is the bridge built by Rama, an incarnation of Vishnu to rescue his consort Sita who was abducted to Lanka by Ravana, as mentioned in the Ramayana. Geological evidence indicates that this bridge acted as a former land connection between India and Sri Lanka.

³ Cf. Vidyajyothi 71 (2007)/7, p. 483.

⁴ Cf. *The Church and the Bible. Official Documents of the Catholic Church*, 2nd revised and enlarged ed., Bangalore 2007, p. 689-691.

Bishop Egger and Archbishop Esua Appointed to Significant Posts for the Upcoming Synod on the Word of God

On January 12, 2008 Pope Benedict XVI filled some important positions for the upcoming Twelfth Synod of Bishops. Bishop Wilhelm Emil Egger, ofm cap., of Bolzano-Bressanone, Italy, President of the Catholic Biblical Federation from 1996 to 2002, was named Special Secretary for the Synod. Also Archbishop Cornelius Fontem Esua of Cameroon, a past Executive Committee member of the Catholic Biblical Federation from 1990 to 2002, was appointed as a member of the Special Council for Africa of the Synod of Bishops.

The Catholic Biblical Federation greeted these appointments with great joy as two former representatives of the Federation will thus be holding significant posts before and during the Synod, both bishops being internationally renowned in the fields of biblical exegesis and biblical pastoral ministry.

The Synod will bring together some 250 bishops at the Vatican to discuss the theme "The Word of God in the Life and the Mission of the Church".



Life of the Federation

Italy: Second Meeting of the CBF Executive Committee in Rome

The CBF Executive Committee met in Rome from November 16 to 19, 2007. The meeting was necessary to discuss important questions regarding the preparations for the Seventh Plenary Assembly, but above all to make decisions regarding the collaboration and participation of the CBF in the Twelfth Synod of Bishops on the Word of God.

Moreover, the Executive Committee used its last work meeting before the Plenary Assembly to deal with those personnel questions that are required by the CBF constitution. In accordance with the tradition of the CBF, the Executive Committee elects the President of the Federation and the coordinators of the CBF before the Plenary Assembly and it nominates Administrative Board members, who in turn, will be confirmed by the Plenary Assembly.

This is all to ensure that new office-holders can take part already in the Plenary Assembly and that no seat-vacancy arises. All the elected officials will enter upon their office at the time of the coming Plenary Assembly. The election of coordinators was postponed to a later time, because the (sub-)regions themselves have to be surveyed first. The existing members of the Administrative Board who candidated for election were re-elected. However, two further candidates still have to be found. In this connection the Executive Committee recognized the work of the Administrative Board and expressed its great appreciation and heartfelt thanks.



The final item on the agenda was the election of the CBF President. The current office-holder, Bishop Vincenzo Paglia, ran for re-election and was unanimously re-elected with enormous substantive support. The discussion that turned on this matter of personnel showed the great extent to which the Executive Committee appreciates the President's dynamic and inspiring administration. All of the old and new office-holders will be introduced *in extenso* during the Plenary Assembly. ■

AFRICA

D.R. Congo: National Workshop on Biblical Pastoral Ministry

For the first time in its history, the Commission for the Biblical Pastoral Ministry of the Episcopal Conference in the D. R. Congo organised a workshop on biblical apostolate to reflect and plan on new avenues for this ministry in all dioceses of Congo. Representatives from 20 dioceses and other invitees took part in this five-day workshop on the theme, "The Word of God in our Basic Christian Communities". It was organised at the Centre Nganda in Kinshasa from February 10 to 15, 2008.



The workshop was opened with a Eucharistic celebration presided over by the President of the Commission, Mgr. Gaspard Mudiso, svd. An opening discourse was pronounced by the new archbishop of Kinshasa, Mgr. Laurent Mosengwo, a biblical scholar himself, in which he called on for a more coordinated and concerted effort to promote the biblical apostolate. As it was the first ever in the country, different speakers proposed concrete ideas to begin the ministry. Fr. Ghislain Tshikendwa, sj, speaking on "Wisdom in the Bible and human liberation" proposed a contextualised reading of Scripture taking into consideration the suffering and injustice which prevail on the continent. The participants also discussed the importance of Sacred Scripture in catechetics (Fr. Jacques Marie Nzir, Secretary of the Commission) and in the life of the Church (Mgr. Gaspard Mudiso).



The Pauline Fathers and the Divine Word Missionaries were specially invited to share their experiences in this field. Fr. Mathew Thekkeyil, Fr. Michel Bandowa (both Centre Liloba) and Fr. Fransisco Fernandez (Verbum Bible) organised workshops on Basic Bible Seminar, biblical emissions and Bible-sharing respectively. The presence of Fr. Moïse Adekambi, Director of BICAM, was very encouraging.

Inspired and enriched by the seminar the participants resolved to work together with the other pastoral agents of their diocese to start or continue their biblical pastoral ministry with added fervour.

(Report: Mathew Thekkeyil)

ASIA

India: Fifth South Asian Workshop in Mumbai

Forty biblical animators from South Asia sought the light of the Word for their biblical pastoral ministry at the recent Fifth South Asian Workshop of the Catholic Biblical Federation (CBF), declaring to promote a "Culture of the Bible" in communities and to train lay animators who in turn can form other lay people.

The biblical workshop, held from January 2 to 5, 2008, at Sarvodaya Centre of the St. Pius College in Mumbai, India, reflected on the theme "Word of God: Source of Justice and Peace" in the context of South Asia. The event was a concrete preparation for the upcoming



Seventh Plenary Assembly of the CBF in Tanzania and the Twelfth Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops on "The Word of God in the Life and the Mission of the Church" in Rome.

The opening mass was celebrated by Cardinal Oswald Gracias, Archbishop of Mumbai and President of the Conference of

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Catholic Bishops of India (CCBI). In his address to the participants, the cardinal made reference to the challenges mentioned in the *Lineamenta* for the Bishops' Synod: There is a felt need for "a total and complete knowledge of the Church's teachings concerning the Word of God. It also requires employing suitable methods in providing all Christians with opportunities to encounter Sacred Scripture." Archbishop Soosa Pakiam, Chairman of the CCBI Commission for Bible, gave the keynote address.

The workshop was a rich experience of deep reflection on the theme with the help of scholarly and pastorally relevant presentations, panels and group sharing. All through the workshop the context of South Asia was kept in focus, while the Word of God built the centre of daily *lectio divina*, Eucharistic celebration, talks, reflections and sharing.

The participants pledged to promote a "Culture of the Bible" in communities. Such a culture will come about through a process of animation, training and formation whereby individuals, families and communities give centrality to the Word of God in their lives and encourage people to bring their own Bible for prayer and devotions. This will enhance their reverence and attachment to the Bible. Every form of the ministry of the Word – whether in liturgy, catechesis, Small Christian Communities, families, prayer groups, biblical formation programs – should let the Word shed its light on the concrete life situations so as to interpret God's will in situations of injustice, exclusion and division. This prophetic interpretation should lead to an authentic and credible response as individuals and communities.

(Report: Peter Abir)

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Philippines: Fifth Southeast Asian Workshop

Twenty-five CBF members from ten countries of the subregion of Southeast Asia (SEA) gathered together in Cagayan de Oro City, Philippines, on February 15 to 17, 2008 for their fifth subregional biblical workshop. This meeting immediately followed the 17th National Biblical Workshop of the Episcopal Commission for the Biblical Apostolate (ECBA-CBCP) which commenced on February 11 with more than 250 participants attending. The two workshops with the theme: "Word of God, Source of Justice, Reconciliation and Peace" were in active preparation for the upcoming Seventh Plenary Assembly of the CBF to be held in Tanzania from June 24 to July 3 and the Twelfth Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops on "The Word of God in the Life and Mission of the Church" which will take place in Rome in October, 2008.



The objectives of the SEA workshop were:

- to reflect together with the official speakers on the Word of God as source of justice, reconciliation and peace;
- to apply these reflections to the participants' personal situations;
- to review the current pastoral activities and find new ways and means to promote justice and peace through the Sacred Scriptures;



- ▣ to share what SEA members are doing in their own regions for the enrichment of the community at large;
- ▣ to establish SEA's role in the work towards world peace.

For more information please check the SEA website <http://cbfsea.wordpress.com>.

(Report: Emma Gunanto)

Myanmar: Translation of the Bible into Burmese

Bishop Sotero Phamo and Fr. John Aye Kyaw initiated the translation of the Catholic edition in Burmese on February 15, 2001 by forming a Bible Translation Committee with some religious sisters as members. After a lot of hard work, discussions and valuable inputs from experts, the Catholic Church of Myanmar launched the first edition of the Burmese Catholic Bible on November 24, 2005. This edition contains all the Books of the New Testament, the Deuterocanonicals, Psalms and Proverbs. It was a milestone for the local Catholic Church in Myanmar to achieve this. The first edition covers 38 Books out of 73 Books in the canon of Holy Scripture.

After this first edition work went on and the following translations have meanwhile been finished:

- ▣ four Books from the Pentateuch: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers,
- ▣ ten Books from the Prophets: Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Hosea, Obadia, Micah, Habakkuk, Zephania, Zechariah and Malachi.

Altogether, 14 Books have been finished which leaves 21 Books still to be translated:

- ▣ one Book from the Pentateuch: Deuteronomy,
- ▣ eleven from the historical Books: Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings, 1 and 2 Chronicles, the Book of Ezra, the Book of Nehemiah,
- ▣ three from the Wisdom Books: Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs and the Book of Job,
- ▣ six Books from the Prophets: Isaiah, Joel, Amos, Jonah, Nahum, Haggai.

The first edition (final edition) of the Catholic Bible in Burmese has now reached the final stage. With the help of the Pastoral Bible Foundation and Claretian Publications, the Revised Version (more error-free with better language and updates) has been submitted for printing on good quality paper. It is expected to be in circulation before the end of 2008.

(Report: Fr. Francis Aung Min Naung)

Macau: Eighth UCCBA Meeting

Under the theme "Experiences of Community Building with the Word of God" representatives of Chinese communities from 17 countries gathered for the eighth meeting of the United Chinese Catholic Biblical Association which took place in Macau from November 1 to 5, 2007. With more than 110 participants – including 77 lay people – more delegates attended this meeting than any of the previous ones. Another notable achievement was that nine new countries and regions, covering Canada, Japan, Myanmar, Australia, New Zealand, the Philippines, Thailand, and Vietnam, were represented at the Macau meeting.

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The opening and closing masses of the meeting which was summoned to coincide meaningfully with the celebration of the centennial birthday of Fr. Gabriel Maria Allegra, ofm (1907-1976), the promoter of the Catholic translation of the Holy Bible into Chinese were celebrated by Cardinal Joseph Zen Ze-kiun of Hong Kong and Bishop Jose Lai Hung-seng of Macau respectively. In commemoration of the 40th anniversary of the Chinese Holy Bible in 2008, participants collectively made the following resolutions as future planning for the ministry of the Word:

- align with the Seventh Plenary Assembly of the CBF (theme: "Word of God – Source of Reconciliation, Justice and Peace") and the Twelfth Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops (theme: "The Word of God in the Life and Mission of the Church") in 2008 to promote the biblical pastoral ministry;
- strengthen communion and service of love and fulfil the historic mission of reconciliation, under the illumination of God's Word;
- enhance the spiritual life by praying with the Bible in a Chinese cultural context;
- intensify formation of Bible-reading group leaders;
- make good use of technology and the mass communication media to promote popularisation of reading the Bible;
- promote the work of the UCCBA through networking, sharing of resources and the establishment of a foundation to assist the deficient regions;
- create new ways for people to access Sacred Scripture, getting in touch with the Word.
- Following the example of Holy Mary, Mother of God, who gave birth and nurtured Jesus Christ, we are willing to spend our entire life to bring God's Word to the world.



The meeting focused on sharing of concrete experiences and giving witness on how the Word of God has formed, nourished and enlivened individuals and communities in different contexts (cf. Heb 4:12).

In addition, delegates of respective areas resolved to continue promoting biblical pastoral ministry according to their specific situations in order to establish the Bible more solidly as the heart and energy of building Christian communities:

- First-time participants from Australia, Japan, Myanmar, the Philippines and Thailand will share experiences of the eighth UCCBA meeting with their respective communities as the base for future planning.
- Vietnam resolves to unite the Chinese parishes in the country to read and study the Bible.
- New Zealand will encourage the faithful to study Sacred Scripture, train lay leaders and put emphasis on strengthening the spiritual life of young people.
- China will promote devotional reading of the Bible among priests and lay people. Biblical promotion organizations will be established on the diocesan level to initiate general biblical pastoral ministry and form core members of biblical prayer groups. Resources within the dioceses and biblical learning experiences of overseas Chinese will be tapped so as to compile systematic training materials for Bible-reading communities and the laity.

In his video message, CBF President, Bishop Vincenzo Paglia, compared the Macau meeting to the evangelical scene described in the Gospel according to John when Jesus said to the disciples: "Open your eyes and look at the fields." (Jn 4:35) He hoped that the UCCBA event could help in the preparation for the Bishops' Synod next year. CBF General Secretary, Alexander M. Schweitzer, highlighted in his message that the UCCBA meeting took place at the opportune moment prior to the "World Year of the Bible" in



2008, in connection with the CBF's Seventh Plenary Assembly in Africa and the Twelfth Ordinary Assembly of the Bishops' Synod on the Word of God taking place at the Vatican

The next UCCBA event is scheduled for 2010 in Kuala Lumpur. In the interim, biblical meetings among Chinese communities at local and regional levels will take place to live out the resolutions of the Macau meeting. A more detailed report of the meeting can be found on the CBF website www.c-b-f.org.



(Report: Cecilia Chui)

EUROPE / MIDDLE EAST

Slovenia: Annual Meeting of the Central European Subregion

From September 16 to 18, 2007 the Central European subregion met for its annual meeting against a picturesque mountain backdrop in Slovenia. This subregion is remarkable for the fact that its members in the past belonged to two different worlds that were separated by the Iron Curtain: the Eastern-Communist and the Western-Capitalist. Collaboration within the subregion during the first years can, therefore, best be described by the term transfer: the West to East transfer, which consisted above all in material assistance, and the East-West transfer, which was of a more spiritual nature that often had to do with courageous Christian witness, lived out in Communist regimes, or with the imagination and creative ability of people who managed to make the best out of adverse situations. More than 15 years after the fall of the Iron Curtain the situation has changed. It is all still about transfer, however, primarily about the transfer of experiences, methods and programs in biblical pastoral work – and indeed now on an equal footing. Material support will continue to be needed now and then, but this aspect is far from being of central concern at this point. Because of this transformation the Central European subregion is now working intensely on adapting its own structures to this new reality.

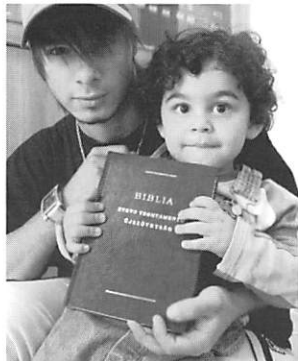
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The Catholic Biblical Associations in Austria, Germany and Switzerland have been developing interesting biblical pastoral programs, in addition to their rich publication and teaching activities. These are designed both for the continuing formation of collaborators at the parish and diocesan levels as well as for people in everyday life. Their work is often marked also by good collaboration with the Bible Society of the respective country. On the task line-up of the Catholic Biblical Associations in Hungary, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Croatia, Poland, Rumania and Slovenia number among other things translations (e.g. into the languages of Roma and Sinti), Bible camps, Bible olympiads, Bible summer camps, training and advanced education for biblical pastoral collaborators, conferences at the academic level, biblical pastoral publications and exhibits, to name only a few. The exchange in Slovenia has once again highlighted the plethora of activities of the Catholic Biblical Associations in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe.



Austria: Presentation of the Romanes-Lovari Translation of the Pentateuch

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After many years of translation work the full edition of the Bible for Sinti and Roma in Lovari dialect has been brought to completion. At a ceremonial presentation in Eisenstadt, Austria also attended by Mr. Claudio Ettl as representative of the Catholic Biblical Federation, the Pentateuch, all five Books of Moses, was presented to the public in October, 2007. The complete Lovari edition which is the first translation ever into this dialect, is now on its way to the presses. This should not only further promote the dissemination of the biblical message among Sinti and Roma in Central Europe, but also contribute to the identity endowment of this population. Thus the Bishop of Eisenstadt, Most Rev. Paul Iby, expressed his hope that "projects of this kind may contribute towards overcoming the discrimination of minorities and be of aid in also maintaining written traditions and cultures".

This translation is the fruit of an initiative of the Director of the Hungarian Biblical Association, Prof. Béla Tarjanyi. The New Testament in Lovari was completed three years ago and the complete edition of the Bible will probably be out in the course of the year 2008.

Hungary: "New Land" – The Bible as Daily Newspaper

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This may have something to do with the "packaging" of the text where, however, the content still remains quite relevant today. The directors of the Hungarian Biblical Association also gave some thought to this issue – and they came up with a good idea: They presented the Gospel text not in the classical style of a Bible edition, but in the form of a contemporary newspaper. "New Land" (*Új Ország*) is the name of this eight-page release, which at first sight appears as colorful and diversified as any other newspaper, with large headlines, suitable photos and a variety of different rubrics. Sections that feature the various Gospel texts range from culture and politics to economy and from family to sports and medicine. Even under the heading "Lotto" we find something: the words of Jesus on the treasure in heaven that remains (Mk 10:17-22). And even an obituary is not missing: Under the headline "Horror at a birthday party" the story of John the Baptist (Mk 6:14-28) is told. Already a good number of other CBF-members are putting some thought into how this idea might be implemented in their countries as well.



Lebanon: Tenth Biblical Congress of the Middle-Eastern Subregion

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The tenth Biblical Congress of the Catholic Biblical Federation in the Middle-Eastern sub-region took place from January 21 to 26, 2008 in the monastery of Notre-Dame du Puits in Jal ed-Dib, north of Beirut, and was devoted to the Gospel of Mark. In spite of the politically unstable situation in Lebanon participants from Iraq, from Syria, from the Holy Land, from Sudan and from Egypt were able to be welcomed. The only one missing was the representative of the Federation in Iran, who for personal reasons had to forego attendance. The participants valued the presence of the CBF General Secretary, Alexander Schweitzer, and the main speaker, Prof. Camille Focant, of the University of Leuven,



Belgium as a special sign of solidarity. Finally, the fact that about 50 of the participants came from Lebanon itself documented in an impressive way the great interest in Lebanon for this congress and the vibrant activity of the subregion in this particular country.

Among the speakers were Copts, Roman Catholics, representatives of the Greek-Orthodox as well as of the Greek Catholic Churches, Protestants, Maronites and Syrian Catholics. People were well attuned to one another; intensive exchange of ideas as well as constructive criticisms were welcomed on all sides.



The congress proved to be very multifaceted and rich in content, with seven lectures a day, given by contributors from the different countries and churches. In view of the situation in the host country a great uncertainty was in the air, but this had little impact on the flow of the congress or on the interest of participants and auditors, and not a single change had to be made in the program.

This congress, which brought together Christians from a conflict-ridden region of the world, resulted in a very impressive exchange of vibrant experiences and moving testimonies. At the end of the congress a number of different evaluation meetings were scheduled. On the final evening the individual groups presented themselves with sketches, songs and little stories. The positive fruits of this congress showed themselves on a number of levels: human, ecumenical, scientific and pastoral and, finally, also in the form of publications.

Italy: Annual Meeting of the Subregion of Rome

On November 29, 2007 the members of the CBF subregion of Rome held their annual meeting. The host was once again the generalate of the Divine Word Missionaries. In March of last year the subregion had already convoked an extraordinary meeting, to which, besides the members, other observers were invited as well. The goal of this meeting was to plan suggestions for programs, projects and activities of the CBF in Rome in view of the Twelfth Synod of Bishops. The yearly meeting in November thus dealt primarily with an initial evaluation of this planning. Even if all the projected plans could not or cannot be implemented, it remains true nonetheless that many of the members of the subregion will be fully engaged in connection with the Synod. Universities will be holding discussion panels or symposiums on the Synod topic in the run-up to, as well as during the Synod, exhibitions will take place in various locations, and in coordination with the Pontifical Council for Culture a number of cultural events will be organized. Besides the direct contributions to the Synod, which we will return to below, the CBF will also be collaborating through its Roman members in the run-up to and at the margins of the Twelfth Synod of Bishops on a number of levels.

Besides the topic of the Synod numerous suggestions were collected as to how the CBF might meaningfully intensify its presence in Rome. It once again became clear that the systematic address of students of the Roman Universities as potential propagandists for the concerns of the CBF throughout the world was one important measure and concrete steps to achieve this were considered. As important as is the presence of the CBF in Rome, our personnel capacities in the eternal city are, unfortunately, very reduced at the present time.

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Spain: Annual Meeting of the Subregion of Southern and Western Europe in Tarragona

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Participants from England, Belgium, Luxembourg, Switzerland, Italy, Spain, France and Germany gathered from November 9 to 11, 2007 for the annual meeting of the subregion of Southern and Western Europe in the Catalan town of Tarragona, Spain. The agenda made plenty of room for the exchanging of experiences and reports on activities in the different nations and Claudio Ettl was there as the CBF delegate from the General Secretariat, Stuttgart. The common concern of participants here to support the Church in making the reading and meditation of Sacred Scripture the center of all its activities was very evident. The common conviction was that it is not the quantitative increase in the number of Bible-sharing and Bible-studying groups that is the imperative of the hour, but rather the promotion of Sacred Scripture as the foundation and reference point of all pastoral realms.

An important item on the agenda was moreover the work on the *Lineamenta* for the upcoming Twelfth Synod of Bishops on the Word of God. Since everyone present had drawn up a report for his or her own Bishops' Conference, much of the preliminary work had already been accomplished – and from here the work in Tarragona could take its start. Alongside fundamental insights such as, for example, the demand that basic texts such as *Dei Verbum* and the documents of the Pontifical Biblical Commission of 1993 and 2001 must be taken more seriously and that the central role of the Bible in the life of the Church should continue to be resolutely promoted, the participants also formulated very concrete suggestions for the Twelfth Synod of Bishops. For example, they suggested that the biblical message should be translated into modern non-literary forms of communication, that the ordering of liturgical readings is in urgent need of re-working or that the Bishops gathered for the Synod should hold a daily common *lectio divina*. At the end of the list – should you wish to see the complete version, please see www.c-b-f.org, link "subregions" – stands the wish that the Synod will not only lead to the creation of new structures, but that it might also contribute to a genuine biblical animation and inspiration of the entire pastoral realm.



During the meeting which was extremely well organised by the head of the Catalan Biblical Association, Joan Magi Ferré, and his colleagues, the participants had the welcome opportunity for an exchange with the Archbishop of Tarragona, Mons. Jaume Pujol Balcells. The program also included a visit to the Bible Museum of the Catalan Biblical Association and a tour round the Cathedral and Tarragona's architectural Roman sites.



Simple Bible Reading

A New Introductory Course to the Bible and to Bible-Reading

The Swiss Catholic Biblical Association and the Biblical Association of Linz, both CBF members for years, have together developed a new course of introduction to the Bible and to Bible-reading which in many ways has broken new ground. Dieter Bauer, who conducts this joint project, tells us about it:

We have given this Bible course the title "Simple Bible-Reading". The three terms of this motto, each with its own emphasis, well express what the course is about:

- Simple BIBLE-reading means: the course was conceived for people who do read, but who thus far have had little or no contact specifically with the Bible.
- SIMPLE Bible-Reading means: the course gives fundamental information about the Bible in a simple way, and intends above all to rouse people's curiosity for further engagement with the Book of books.
- Simple Bible-READING means: the presupposition is that all participants are fundamentally capable of reading the Bible, understanding it and getting something out of it for their own lives.

The course is a "simple" Bible course. Nevertheless, it should not be underestimated: for a successful course it is indispensable therefore that the course leaders have training in the major theological disciplines. It should then be given by pastors, parish leaders or biblically trained lay persons. The Bible course consciously intends to present the Bible in simple ways, and therefore it omits much that could be said – and perhaps even things that should be said. The course leader must therefore be able to effectively achieve simplification. Competent leaders will never lose sight of the larger contexts. These are to be stated explicitly in the goal and content guidelines for each unit and each passage studied.

Goals

The course conveys fundamental information about the Bible and about how to make use of its texts. And it explicitly inquires as to how the Book of books can be made fruitful for one's own life. The course is so fashioned that it can be given even outside of Church structures. The target audience is people who know nothing or next to nothing about the Bible. But even people who

have been reading the Bible for a long time or who live with the Bible receive stimulation and new fundamental approaches. The course has as its goal to sensitize people for an appropriate use of the Bible and to rouse their interest in the Book of books.

Structure

The Bible course consists of four parts. About two hours' time is required for each unit. The sections are constructed with a high level of diversification. In each unit information is given regarding background and contexts; but the course also has as its aim the appropriation of the text in the life of the participants. There is much talk about the Bible, but the ultimate goal is that participants can discover it for their own lives. It is important that the leaders also trust the participants to develop their own relationship with the Bible. The four parts of the course are:

1. *The Bible – the great unknown book: how and where the Bible arouses*

People can be interested in the Bible for a great variety of reasons. The participants learn from one another what made them want to take this course. A conversation takes place about "Holy Scripture" in general and other "Holy Scriptures" alongside the Bible. The Bible is presented as a library consisting of two parts: Old and New Testament, and information is given about the topic: How the Bible came to be? Where the Bible was produced? The quality of the transmission of the Bible.



2. *First orientation in the Bible: what all is in the Bible?*

Information is given about the structure of the Bible as well as an overview of its contents, and the individual biblical books. The participants learn how to find a Bible text in a book by chapter and verse reference. Another topic is that of the aids which the Bible itself offers on every page (the sectional titles, references and citations



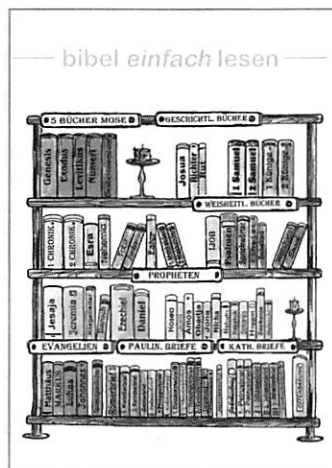
of parallel passages, footnotes) and in the appendices, as well as what can be known of the peculiar characteristics of different common Bible editions.

3. A text comes to life: how one can read and understand the Bible

Participants are introduced to the theoretical foundations of the reading process and the methods of appreciating the text in its structure and how to read it slowly. Questions are: What stands out when the text is looked at more closely? What is peculiar about a text? Place and time indications as signals for a change of scene. Who appears in a text? Who does what? Methods of uncovering the real message of a text are practiced.

4. A variety of approaches to the Bible

Different approaches to a biblical text are introduced through three reflectors: the synchronic and the diachronic approaches as well as an approach that starts from the experience of the reader. Using Psalm 23 as a model these approaches are presented as mutual enrichment and spiritual experiences are enabled in the three life-spaces of the Psalm.



The course package contains all kinds of documentation that are essential for giving the "Simple Bible-Reading" course. Those who prefer not to work with the CD-ROM power-point presentations that come with the

course packet, but would rather use slides, will find a set of forty transparencies in the course package which can be used with the course (for three examples see the illustrations of this article). Three members of the Catholic Biblical Federation, the Catholic Biblical Association in Stuttgart, the Swiss Catholic Biblical Association and the Biblical Association of Linz are marketing the manuals.

The materials can be obtained

in Germany from:

Katholisches Bibelwerk e.V.
Silberburgstr. 121
70176 Stuttgart
Tel.: +711-619 20-69
Fax: +711-619 20-77
E-mail: bibelinfo@bibelwerk.de
Website: www.bibelwerk.de; www.dbk.de

in Switzerland from:

Bibelpastorale Arbeitsstelle des Schweizerischen
Katholischen Bibelwerks
Bederstr. 76
8002 Zürich
Tel.: +44-205 99 62
Fax: +44-201 43 07
E-mail: info@bibelwerk.ch
Website: www.bibelwerk.ch

in Austria from:

Katholisches Bibelwerk der Diözese Linz
Kapuzinerstr. 84
4020 Linz
Tel.: +732-76 10 32-31
Fax: +732-76 10 32-39
E-mail: bibelwerk@dioezese-linz.at
Website: www.dioezese-linz.at

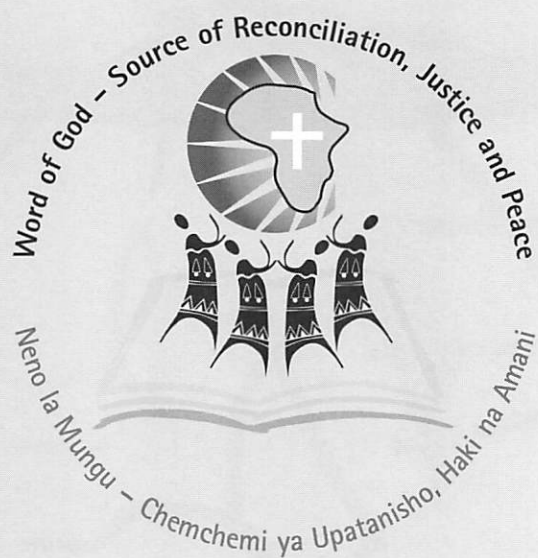
(Translation: L. Maluf)

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Titus Amigu (p. 20), Dominik Apaatah (p. 23), Egbert Ballhorn (p. 4), CEDEBI (p. 7), Ayoub Chawan (p. 39), J.-P. Chevrolet (p. 22 left), Cecilia Chui (p. 33 bottom, 34, 36, 37), Gerald Gossmann (p. 38 top) Lucien Legrand, mep (p. 28), Walther Ruspi (p. 13), Schweizerisches Katholisches Bibelwerk (p. 41, 42) Mathew Thekkeyil, svd (p. 33), www.bzm.de (p. 27); all other photos: CBF archives.



The logo of the CBF Plenary Assembly in Dar es Salaam

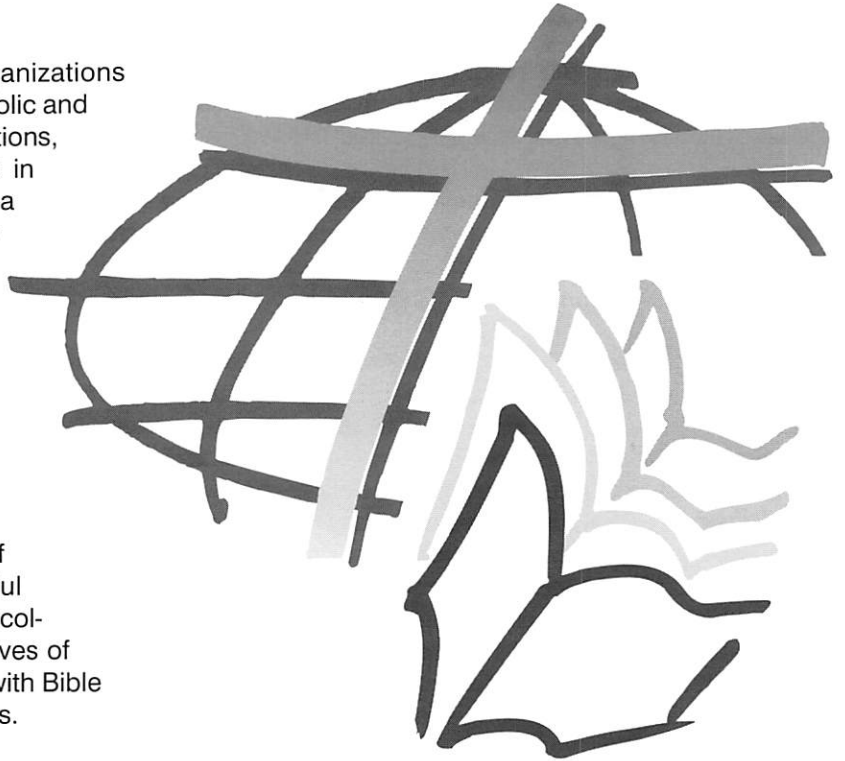


Go to CBF website www.c-b-f.org where the logo
can be downloaded as a jpg-file or an eps-file.

The Catholic Biblical Federation (CBF) is a world-wide association of Catholic organizations committed to the ministry of the Word of God. At the present time, the CBF membership includes 95 full members and 233 associate members coming from a total of 133 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 Holy Scripture.

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



In particular, the CBF works towards 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.

At the beginning of the third millennium Holy Scripture can be viewed as the great textbook of humanity. Especially in times like this the reading of the Bible not only helps the Christian community to grow in faith and love, but it can and should also offer to the whole world those words of brotherhood and of human wisdom that it so desperately needs. This is the great challenge that the Catholic Biblical Federation sets for itself.

Vincenzo Paglia, Bishop of Terni-Narni-Amelia, Italy, President of the CBF