

# DEIVERBUM

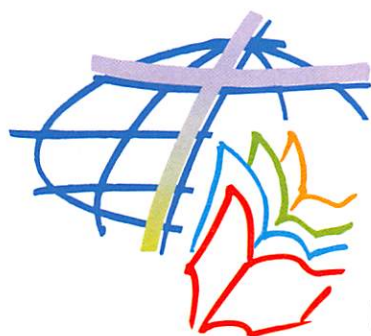
**Catholic Biblical Federation**

**NEWS  
LETTERS  
BULLETIN**

**The Preparation of the Plenary  
Assembly: a Common Goal**

**The Change of Guards:  
a New General Secretary**

**The CBF in the Internet:  
a New Dimension of Networking**



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The Catholic Biblical Federation (CBF) is an "International Catholic Organisation of a public character" according to Canon Law (CIC, can. 312,\$1, n. 1).



## EDITORIAL

### Dear Readers,

The last issue of the year turned out to be fuller than planned. The larger volume corresponds to the significance for the life of the Catholic Biblical Federation of the topics and events presented here: the preparations for the Sixth Plenary Assembly to be held in Lebanon in the year 2002, the change in the office of the General Secretary and the increasingly intense use of electronic communications media – here the new, central internet presence of the CBF.

The Plenary Assemblies of the Catholic Biblical Federation are not merely ten-day events that take place every six years; nor are they merely business meetings. Plenary Assemblies shape the life and character of the Federation in a permanent way; they are in effect "pastoral energizers", as Jacob Theckanath, who has attended all of them since the Malta meeting in 1978, calls them. In the "diary" of Daniel Kosch you will discover where, in the Federation as a whole, the preparations for the upcoming Plenary Assembly are already leaving their mark. Besides the important workshops of Bangalore and Bandung, and the Colloque Biblique in Paris, numerous smaller events have taken place and much has been written on the theme of the Plenary Assembly (see under the heading "Books and Materials"). The participants of the Colloque Biblique, for example, in view of the upcoming Plenary, focused on the challenges biblical ministry faces at the crossroads of the cultures. Tom Osborne gives a short account of this meeting.

A second important event was the change in the office of the General Secretary. Clara María Díaz,

who has long been the coordinator of the Sub-region of Latin America and the Caribbean, assumed this office in July of 2000. In a small festive act in September this change was also symbolically effected. The many displays of enthusiasm for the CBF, as well as the promises of support for the time that lies ahead of us, were moving and encouraging. We would like to share this event with you, and so we reproduce here a few of the papers and speeches given on the occasion.

A key-word that ran through the speeches of the festive act was "networking". Networking has always been a central concern of the CBF and it governs the daily life of the General Secretariat. Possibilities of electronic communication such as E-mail and Internet have revolutionized the world (of communication), offer wonderful opportunities and create new challenges. Our aim is to make use of the opportunities and to master the challenges. This applies also to the new, central website of the CBF, with its various information and communication possibilities, which we introduce to you in this issue.

A good wish and New Year's resolution would be: to use the traditional and also the virtual channels and platforms for genuine exchange, substantive communication and effective networking.

With a warm greeting from the General Secretariat,

Alexander M. Schweitzer



## The Plenary Assembly of the Catholic Biblical Federation –

### a Pastoral Energizer

JACOB THECKANATH

*The author, Fr. Jacob Theckanath, is coordinator of the CBF subregion of South Asia and has participated in all the CBF Plenary Assemblies since Malta 1978. He is a member of the Preparatory Committee for the VI Plenary Assembly in Beirut 2002.*

he CBF is not an institution; it is a movement - a movement of the Word and for the Word. It is a world-wide movement. It is people who make up the movement. The Spirit and the Word are the source of its energy. We are not only involved in a pastoral ministry. We are engaged in a process of renewal of the Church and of the world. We are part of a movement: "Behold I make all things new" (Rev 21:5).

Any movement is within a historical process and it is an on-going one. We are called to be a **catalyst** for

the transformation of the world, accelerating the process of the coming of the kingdom of God. The church, therefore, is called a **pilgrim church**. Pilgrims look forward to the destination. This involves both gauging the distance already covered as well as clarifying the direction of the journey. PAs have been precisely opportunities for the ministers of the word to come together and to pause as if at a **milestone** on the road to the goal of proclaiming the word to the ends of the earth, in view of a new heaven and a new earth. The PA enables mem-

bers to assess critically where they are in their journey and to seek direction and momentum. Cardinal Koenig, one of the past Presidents of the CBF spells out as follows in his inaugural address in Malta (II Plenary Assembly, 1978) "First we propose to formulate concrete priorities to guide our work for the next six years". In the PAs we have experienced the impact of this common search for direction and discernment of the paths to walk, to see those **sign posts** that have helped us to focus our energies towards the realization of very concrete goals in the ministry of the word.

PAs are moments of re-launching. "Put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch"(Lk 5:4). In journey sometimes one experiences stagnation, obstacles and exhaustion and even retardation. Any movement will face such situations. For biblical-pastoral ministry, the incentive for re-launching comes from the PAs. For those who get exhausted, those who feel stagnation and lose enthusiasm, the Plenary has been such an energizing experience for re-launching the movement. This is very closely connected with the wider mission of those involved in the biblical pastoral ministry. While the second PA concentrated on "Biblical Spirituality and Biblical Catechizes", the third PA focussed its attention on the role of the laity in the prophetic ministry "Would that all were Prophets". The fourth PA had inserted itself in the struggles of people for liberation. The whole vision of new evangelization was related to the world-wide movement for liberation. The fifth PA had as its theme: Word of God – Source of Life. "The Word was made flesh – that they may have life in all its fullness". This theme was related to survival, culture of death, meaning of life. The word that inserts itself in the cultures of people. These are some of the very relevant examples of this re-launching into the mainstream of life and history. The Church and any





movement needs to re-found itself in successive movements in order to be an instrument of renewal of the world. For to be pastoral and ecclesial is to be inserted in the movement of God's Spirit. Biblical pastoral ministry should remain a movement. A movement has to be a mass movement. The PA is an instrument for this on-going process.

The Plenary Assemblies are occasions of a collective and intense reading of the signs of the times for the community of the ministers of the word. As Cardinal Koenig said in Malta "The ultimate objective of the Biblical Apostolate is not so much to interpret the Bible as to interpret life"(Plenary Assembly, Malta '78, p.13) The very relevant topics chosen for study and reflection at every stage of the Federation's growth testifies to this (see above para). Though situations are different in the various continents and countries, the thrusts discerned at the Plenary Assemblies - preparation, actual assembly, and the follow up - all have facilitated a world-wide and long and intense process of discernment of the signs of the times by the ministers of the Word, not only by those who participated in the Assembly but also by a unlimited number of co-workers in the ministry of the word the world over.

The PAs are celebrations of the Word and a fellowship in the Word. As one of the coordinators of the Federation expresses it: "No progress in the biblical pastoral ministry without friendship in the Catholic Biblical Federation". This fellowship is deepened by the celebration of the Word in an ever growing manner in each PA. The *Lectio Divina* and other celebrations of the word in various forms which have become a feature of the CBF meetings and the PAs is a sign of this deep bond in the Word. Networking is an indispensable element of any movement. The PA is the best means of networking. Without this visible expression of the network of the CBF we

would not be able to experience this world-wide fellowship in the ministry of the Word. It is an opportunity for affirming the creative efforts of those who venture new paths and challenge those who seem satisfied with walking on beaten paths.

Now looking at the theme and the meaning of the next PA in Lebanon in 2002 - Word of God : A blessing for all nations, "You show me the ways of life, we can see already the concern of the CBF with regard to the challenges of Biblical-pastoral ministry in a pluralist world. During the past 30 years of its journey the Catholic Biblical Federation at every important milestone (the sexennial Plenary Assembly) re-iterated its commitment to be co-pilgrims with people of other faiths, people of other scriptures. It is good to recall some of the expressions of such a universal vision, contained in the Statements of the last four Plenary Assemblies of the Federation:

**The Second Plenary Assembly, Malta 1978:** "The peoples of Asia and Africa and other parts of the world have rich religious traditions enshrined in their sacred writings and sustained by a living tradition. In these areas the Gospel often appears to be identified with a particular culture foreign to the people's mentality and expression. This contradictory situation calls for a living encounter with these religions and their sacred writings."

**The Third Plenary Assembly, Bangalore, 1984:** "In discerning the signs of the times, it is necessary for a prophetic people to be open to the stirrings of the Spirit beyond the confines of the Church. Therefore, we feel called to listen to God speaking to us in many ways, including through the scriptures and the spiritual values of other religions, thus enlarging our understanding of the mystery of God and leading us to interpret our own Scriptures in a new light. We feel challenged to dialogue with peo-

ples of other beliefs in order to evolve a common vision and set of values and so to commit ourselves to the building of a new humanity.

**The Fourth Plenary Assembly, Bogota, 1990:** "Our openness to these religions should enable us to discover our own common basis as believers in the same God, journeying towards the same destiny. Thus we shall build up a society united in hope even if, at times, we cannot have one community of faith with people of other religions. In this way, the Bible will become the book of hope for all peoples. This is the Good News that we can proclaim to them. In order to do this, the Church has to become aware of the fact that she has to function as leaven in the midst of the world."

"The Word of the Lord must become Good News for all religions. This can be achieved through a dialogical approach to their scriptures, by reading these scriptures together with the Bible in order to interpret human events and values. It is necessary to prepare manuals that can give guidelines to conduct such sessions of dialogue.

**The Fifth Plenary Assembly, Hong Kong, 1996:** "This attitude of dialogue, of sensitivity to and feeling for "the other", for people of different cultures, different faiths, different world-views, is totally incompatible with any religious arrogance and with any fundamentalist understanding of the Bible. The "scriptural narrowness" of such fundamentalism has rightly been criticized (Cf. *The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church*, Pontifical Biblical Commission).

May the CBF grow with the Word and may the Word grow with the CBF. Let every PA become a powerful moment of the Spirit's energizing presence.

□



## On the Way to the Sixth Plenary Assembly - A Diary

DANIEL KOSCH

*Dr. Daniel Kosch is the Director of the Biblical-Pastoral Service of the Swiss Catholic Biblical Association and Moderator of the Executive Committee of the Catholic Biblical Federation.*

eing on the way is a frequent image for the work of the CBF, as it is for the situation of the whole Church, as pilgrim people of God. A diary that highlights the various stations of the journey is a way of reminding oneself of the path that lies behind, of capturing what is important and of shedding light on the next step.

As Executive Committee moderator I have been present at many – though by no means all – of the stations along the path of preparations, but I have also had personal experiences in my work in Switzerland that are intimately connected with the plans for the Plenary Assembly in Lebanon.

### September 1996 – Plenary Assembly in Hong Kong

During this Plenary Assembly and in the months that followed I recall

especially the encounter with the Asian form of Bible reading as it was presented in her impressive lecture by Sr. Maria Ko.

The longer I concern myself with the question the clearer it becomes to me that the decisive impulse lies in the realm of spiritual or mystical Bible reading. The comparison with Chinese painting and its large white areas, which are just as much part of the picture as are the dark colors, is becoming my favorite image for a new way of reading the Bible. In our intensely bombarded Western world, with its overload of information and its fast-moving pace of life this means concretely: to become less goal-oriented, more frugal and more leisurely – in our dealing with the WORD, but also in the way we live.

I do not dare to assert that I really understand this kind of reading already – I am on the way. And the lit-

tle Buddha I have put up in my office and that keeps a watch over my computer serves as a constant reminder to me of this task.

### June 1997 – First Executive Committee Meeting in Stuttgart

The Executive Committee strikes me as being a kind of "miniature edition" of the Biblical Federation itself. The roughly ten persons on the committee reflect the variety and richness of the Church in all the continents of the world, but also witness to the concerns and needs that govern daily existence in many places: oppression, poverty, conflicts of every kind, sickness and other burdens.

Besides the variety of geographical origins and our capacity to understand each other, in spite of difficulties, even merely from the point of view of language, I am impressed with the way in which bishops and priests, lay persons and religious, women and men are all able to work together as friends and on equal footing. The oft invoked principle of "catholicity" and the fact that before all "hierarchical" differences we are first of all sisters and brothers, children of one Father, have become tangible for me in a unique way in the CBF.

An important theme of the work is the evaluation and implementation of the Plenary Assembly of Hong Kong. It is true, the reactions have been overwhelmingly positive, but we are taking especially seriously the critical reports of the meeting and the directives and suggestions that have been made to implement certain changes (cf. my reports in BDV No. 44 and 46).

It is already quite clear that a future Plenary Assembly must allow more room for discussion, exchange and opinion-shaping among the delegates. Procedures must be improved especially for the business section of the meeting and for the



way in which the final document is worked out. But the combination of Bible-related work and "business affairs" should be maintained. That the two are inseparable belongs to the very essence of the CBF, which depends primarily on the substantive identification of the members with the task of Bible ministry and not on its own very modest structures.

### **Autumn 1998**

The search for a new Secretary General and the business of providing a successor for L. Feldkämper is coming to a good conclusion. This task is only indirectly connected with the Plenary Assembly, but I am always conscious of the fact that the bulk of the difficult preparatory work for a meeting must be done in the General Secretariat. Moreover, the Secretary General's person in some sense embodies the Federation. So I am all the more delighted that with Clara María Díaz the office is being assumed by a woman with deep roots in Biblical ministry, by a lay-woman from Latin America who is also very familiar with the work of the CBF. It is hoped that this choice will be especially helpful precisely because of the bonds it will create between the strong and vibrant members of the Federation in the countries of the South and the "central office" in Stuttgart.

### **April 1999 – Second Executive Committee Meeting in Ariccia (Italy)**

Midway between 1996 and 2002, in terms of time, the major topic of the meeting, which is attended by most of the coordinators, is the preparations for the next Plenary Assembly. The choice of the location has fallen to Beirut (Lebanon), where Paul Féghaly has for years been doing outstanding work and where a good infrastructure is at our disposal.

To come together, at the beginning of the new millennium, on biblical soil, "between Jerusalem and Antioch", is a wonderful idea.

The theme of the Plenary Assembly implies that we will draw on the Acts of the Apostles, and that the central question will be that of pluralism in the World, in the Church, in the Bible and also in the Federation. Multiplicity in all its forms and manifestations is at once an enrichment and a challenge. In Lebanon we will be very concretely confronted with the tension-full plurality of the monotheistic religions (Judaism, Christianity, Islam) but also with various social differences and with a total of 17 (!) different religious communities. But in Asia too religious pluralism is a central theme of life, while in Western societies "pluralism" tends to describe merely a tolerant, all-embracing outlook or feeling. Whether it is a question of life-styles, tastes, philosophical or ethical perspectives, educational styles or politics, we understand ourselves as a "pluralistic society", while our attitude toward all exclusive truth claims is one of strong mistrust.

Even our meeting itself will amount to an experience of pluralism. As conference-moderator I clearly feel how great the cultural differences are. Given a plurality of opinions, some would like to immediately resolve the issue by democratic vote (accepting that there will be "winners" and "losers"); others look for a synthesis at a level of greater commonality (accepting that this will yield more abstract and more general formulations), and others would like the discussions to continue till agreement is reached (accepting that the sessions will last a very long time). The democratic and cerebral culture of discussion that is of Western cut, the Asian-style search for harmony and the form of endless discussion, as it is known in Africa, are not easily put together. Similar differences occur, then, with respect to the ideas people have

regarding the "style" of the Plenary Assembly.

### **Autumn 1999 – Spring 2000**

The theme of the Plenary Assembly and also the choice of the Acts of the Apostles as the central biblical text accompany me in my own work in Switzerland. I rediscover the well-known text and read it now with new eyes. Luke, the evangelist and theologian of unity and continuity, by no means renders multiplicity invisible. The way he describes, e.g., the relationship of the newly emerging Church and the religions in the world of the Roman empire is highly nuanced. In Ephesus alone, Luke mentions disciples of John the Baptist, the Jewish community in the synagogue, a group of persons in the lecture halls of Tyrannus, Greek men and women, people under the influence of magic, Jewish exorcists, the seven sons of the Jewish high priest and the silver smiths who manufacture little Artemis temples... (Acts 19). But he also recognizes a certain pluralism within the church, e.g., in connection with the Apostolic council (Acts 15).

Ecumenical Sunday in Switzerland is also very much in line with the Acts of the Apostles and with the fundamental thrust of biblical ministry. For this occasion, we choose as a text the meeting of the Ethiopian official with the deacon Philip (Acts 8). The workbook we are sending out to the communities illustrates the richness and the variety of the possible approaches to the Bible.

Estrella del Mar, the Executive Committee Member from the Philippines, has sent me by E-mail a report of the workshop in Southeast Asia that took place in Bandung in May. The nearly fifty participants dealt with the question "How to live the Word in a diversified world (religions, worldviews, ethnic groups, violence, poverty) of Southeast Asia, especially Cambodia, Indone-



sia, Brunei, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam and become a blessing for all." I am delighted that the subject of the Plenary Assembly is being addressed for the first time in a comprehensive way. At the same time, I am somewhat ashamed, when I realize that I know hardly anything about many of the countries mentioned – indeed, I know nothing about them at all. In spite of the phenomenon of globalization and all the techniques of modern communication it remains true that only actual relationships between human beings will give rise to a readiness and an ability to become properly aware of foreign countries and cultures. This is one more reason to move forward with the networking effort of the CBF.

### July 2000

The preparation group meets in Stuttgart-Hohenheim, to begin the very concrete process of planning for the Plenary Assembly. We inform ourselves about the situation in Lebanon and formulate four primary goals:

With reference to the structures of the CBF: the story of our work in the last six years will be told with transparency and accuracy. Suggestions for future development will be assembled and discussed already in the period leading up to the meeting.

As to matters of content: spaces will be created for exchange and encounter among those who have common interests and aims. Sufficient space will be made for the question of the future overall development of CBF work.

With reference to procedure: the richness and variety of CBF members should be made visible: through dialogical forms, with the help of workshops and Bible ministry forums for exchange of projects, with the help of good translations

and audiovisual means of communication.

With reference to the context in Lebanon: the participants will gain insight into the whole situation. The local churches will be given the opportunity to familiarize us with their situation and their work.

Jacob Theckanath, who is visiting here from India, has already brought with him a first product of the preparations procedures. In Bangalore, in December 1999, a workshop of the Subregion of South Asia took place. The papers and results of this meeting are documented under the title "Journeying with the Word in Pluralist Asia". I am finding the book extremely helpful and I am impressed with the openness, the clarity of theological reflection and the variety of biblical observations. It troubles me to note that this kind of theological work in Asia is viewed with suspicion by some people, as leading to a loss of the true faith.

It is true that much work still lies ahead, but a schedule and an overall idea for the agenda of the Plenary Assembly supply us with a scaffold from which we can confidently launch the concrete work of planning.

### October 2000

Events and developments more or less directly connected with the Plenary Assembly are becoming ever more frequent – and the thought that by two years from now it will all be over brings it home to us that we really have to work fast now.

The Roman declaration "Dominus Jesus" takes a highly critical stance with respect to tendencies to inter-religious and inner-Christian pluralism. The document shows that the CBF is addressing a very relevant and important theme. But the strongly polarizing reactions throughout the world also document the fact that the Church in this

area too is still "on the way" when it comes to the actual, concrete implementation of the openness that Vatican Council II demanded and made possible. I am sure that this document can not be the last word on the theme of "pluralism". And my experience within the CBF tells me that the timidity, and the corresponding harshness in some of its statements are not well founded – either from a biblical point of view or in respect to the present situation. Investigations and discussions, such as were made possible e.g. by the meeting in Bangalore, but also by the one in Bandung or the one in Paris (see below), were conducted with much pastoral concern and great theological insight on the part of the responsible parties. I am very confident that the attachment to Jesus Christ as Lord of the Church and as the unique expression of God's love for the world will not be abandoned.

Totally different, and far more practical questions are raised in a meeting of leaders of the CBF with the financial agencies that substantially finance our work. The meeting makes clear that the agencies are fully prepared to contribute also to the financing of the Plenary Assembly in Lebanon, but they rightly stress the responsibility of the members to assume where possible the costs of travel and accommodations. And they make it very clear that the preparation process at all levels should be marked by the greatest seriousness and the highest quality of work so as to justify the considerable financial expenditure.

Immediately following this meeting I go on to Paris to the colloquium of the Subregion Latin Europe on the relationship of the Bible to modern culture. This proves to be an outlet for discussing themes such as the mass media, modern means of communication, the presence of the Bible in the secular schools, its relationship to literature, etc., as



well as for various approaches to the Bible: from the perspective of women, in the tradition of Protestantism, in the light of Roman Catholic documents, etc. The Colloquium has been very well prepared, above all by Tom Osborne, the sub-regional coordinator, is happily well attended and of high and therefore challenging quality. The presence of persons from the Middle- and East-European Subregion, from Lebanon, from Africa and Latin America almost turns this Subregional meeting into a "Mini-Plenary Assembly".

On the way home I have time to look through a little book by Joseph Stricher, Director of *Evangelium et Vita* (Paris), that he gave me to take with me. It is called "Irresistible parole" (Irresistible word), and it comments on a few important passages from the Acts of the Apostles, such that the text can be read in groups or by individuals and be made fruitful for one's own life. The world-wide exchange (perhaps also with a number of translations) of Bible ministry material on Acts of the Apostles is an important element of the preparations for the meeting. In this sense, I brought to his attention

the fact that the Latin American CBF Newspaper "La Palabra hoy" has already published an issue on the Acts of the Apostles. In addition, there is also a new edition of "Bibel und Kirche" dedicated to this topic. The material is there – it needs only to be seen, exchanged and naturally also worked with!

Already the Paris Colloquium itself, but especially the time immediately following it has been overshadowed by the rekindling of violence in Israel/Palestine and by the anxiety of war in the entire Middle East region. There is still hope that a war might be averted and that peace-loving forces and international help may contribute to diffuse the tensions – but it is perfectly clear that the religious, political, and economic tensions in the region by no means belong to the past. Living with pluralism and variety is not only exciting, but – unfortunately – also difficult and full of tensions.

After my return I begin with the preparations for the meeting of the Executive Committee in Lebanon which will take place in January 2001. We will strive to prepare ahead of time for as many as possi-

ble of the administrative and formal tasks, so that good suggestions can be passed on to the Plenary Assembly. We are encouraged by the news that the homepage of the CBF on the internet will soon be finished and that in the *Bulletin Dei Verbum* a large amount of space will be devoted to the preparation process. Subregions and individual members will be thinking at home about how they can prepare themselves in the next two years, and also in the General Secretariat in Stuttgart the guiding principle "The Word of God – a blessing for all peoples" takes precedence over all other projects as does the biblical motto "You show me the ways of life".

I will doubtless continue with my diary on the preparations for the upcoming meeting – but it is just as important that as many other people as possible join me in writing their own ongoing diaries too, so as to produce a colorful, richly diverse image of different ways that will come together and enrich each other at the sixth Plenary Assembly of the Catholic Biblical Federation!

(Transl.: L. Maluf)



The site of the Plenary Assembly in Beirut



# Biblical-Pastoral Ministry at the Crossroads of Human Cultures

## Colloquium on Biblical-pastoral ministry organised by the Latin European Subregion

THOMAS P. OSBORNE

In a world of globalized communications and markets, the Biblical pastoral ministry must seek its course within the tumultuous sea of competing cultures and mentalities. Indeed, the contact which has thus become possible, not only between methods of reading the Bible and between various forms of spirituality, confessions and religions, but also between economic, social and media systems, is often experienced as problematic by those directly involved, both individuals and communities. They find themselves in a situation of mutual questioning and competition, even of confrontation and conflict. How can this plurality of situations and approaches to Biblical pastoral work within Christian communities be properly managed? What is the role of Biblical work in the planetary village? What responses are to be given to the fundamental questions that are raised in this connection: that of the place of Biblical revelation among

the sacred texts of the great religions and cultures; that of the various readings of the Bible and their legitimacy within the Christian Churches (historical-critical reading, various spiritual readings, partisan readings, cultural readings, fundamentalist readings, etc.) ... These were some of the questions that the Latin European Subregion of the Catholic Biblical Federation, in collaboration with the Catholic Biblical Agency *Evangelio et Vie*, wished to discuss during the colloquium "Biblical-Pastoral Ministry at the Crossroads of Human Cultures", which took place in Paris, from 6-8 October, 2000.

After the introduction to the colloquium, presented by the coordinator of the Subregion who spoke of "Biblical-Pastoral Ministry Faced with the Challenges of Cultural Pluralism", seven participants took up the following subjects: "The Bible and the Communications Market"

(Pierre Babin, O.M.I., Lyon), "The Word of God and World Religions and Cultures" (Claude Geffré, O.P., Paris), "Women read the Bible : a Feminist or a Feminine Approach?" (Bettina Eltrop, Stuttgart), "Cultural Approaches to the Bible" (Anne-Marie Pelletier, Paris), "The Bible in Literature" (Pierre-Marie Beaude, Metz), "Reading and Interpreting the Bible within the Different Churches: Reflections from a Protestant Point of View" (Jean Zumstein, Zurich) and "Reflections from a Catholic Point of View" (Philippe Bacq, S.J., Brussels).

This colloquium marked an important stage in the Latin European Subregion's ongoing reflection on Biblical-pastoral ministry. The members of this Subregion, coming from eight countries of so called "Latin" Europe – French-speaking Belgium, Spain, France, Italy, Luxembourg, Malta, Portugal, French-speaking Switzerland, countries joined by Great Britain – have devoted their annual meetings to the Biblical-pastoral ministry and the media (Maredsous in 1996), to the so-called "pastoral" Bibles (London in 1997), to the Biblical-pastoral ministry and ecumenism (Madrid in 1998), and to the Biblical-pastoral ministry in the Jubilee Year (Luxembourg in 1999). From these discussions a number of fundamental challenges for the Biblical-pastoral work have emerged:

1. The reading of the Bible and the Biblical-pastoral ministry can no longer take place in a hermetically sealed setting, since the globalization of communications and the necessary contacts between the various cultures, religions and the diverse forms of atheism, spirituality and life-philosophy, etc. are all pervasive.

2. Within the Catholic Church itself, the reading and interpretation of the Bible takes place in the context of very diverse cultures, forms of spirituality, ecclesiologies, hermeneutical approaches, life-situations and



personal commitments. In place of one sole official reading of the Bible, one now finds historical-critical interpretations, charismatic interpretations, interpretations promoted by various other spiritual movements, feminist and feminine approaches, social interpretations, readings proposed by the poor, by African, Asiatic, Latin-American and Western Christians ... What can be done to help this multiplicity of readings, interpretations and applications of the Bible to progress beyond the stage of conflict and competition in order to become a source of mutual enrichment in our search for forms of authentic Christian existence?

3. Among the Christian confessions, the reading and interpretation of the Bible has often been a stumbling block for ecumenical relations and activities. How can the reading of the Bible in an ecumenical context become a place of renewed search for unity which at the same time respects the confessional differences?

4. In the framework of the reading of the Bible within the Catholic Church, as also in ecumenical contexts, what position should be recommended with respect to "fundamentalist" interpretations? Is it possible to offer a specific typology of "the fundamentalist interpretation of the Bible"?

5. In these same contexts, is it possible to accept the view that the Bible, with its darker sides, such as the narratives full of cruelty should be identified without qualification as "the Word of God"? In what sense is the Bible "the Word of God"?

6. The reading and interpretation of the Bible in the Catholic Church constitutes a difficulty for our relations with the Jewish communities on a whole series of points: the transcription of the divine name in our translations, the relation between the "Old" and the "New" Testaments, an often exclusively Christological reading of the Old Testa-

ment, an anti-Jewish reading of certain New Testament texts ... To what extent ought one, or can one nuance the "Catholic" or "Christian" reading of the Bible (First and Second Testaments) in the framework of the relations between Christian and Jewish communities? To what extent could a Jewish sensitivity in reading the Bible enrich our own "Christian" approach?

7. What might be the status of the Bible as *the* sacred text in a multi-religious context, where it is merely one sacred text among others?

8. What relevance can the Biblical text or "message" have in a secularized world, where it is neither the only, nor even a privileged text on the market of meaning or of life philosophies?

9. In a world in which communication takes place more and more through the visual medium, where illiteracy with respect to the reading of "complex" texts is on the increase, the reading of the Biblical text is becoming increasingly problematic. How can one better understand this evolution? What are its implications for Biblical-pastoral ministry, for the policy of Bible editions and of material for Biblical pastoral work, for multi-media approaches to Biblical reading ... ?

Through this colloquium, the acts of which are in the process of being published, the organizers have not sought to propose concrete Biblical pastoral methods; in any event, this is the work of each country in the concrete situation which is its own. Their goal was rather to investigate more deeply certain fundamental questions with which all women and men actively engaged in work with the Bible – whether this is called "Biblical apostolate", "Biblical-pastoral ministry" or "Biblical inspiration of pastoral ministry in general" – are confronted. Moreover, the colloquium constitutes a specific contribution of the Latin European Subregion to the preparations

under way for the Plenary Assembly of the Catholic Biblical Federation which will take place in Lebanon in September 2002 and which will be called to reflect on the question of the Biblical-pastoral ministry in a pluralistic world.

(Transl.: L. Maluf)



For further information about the colloquium please contact:

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## CHANGE IN THE OFFICE OF THE GENERAL SECRETARY

### Festive Act on the Occasion of the Change in the Office of General Secretary

BETTINA ELTROP

*The farewell for the longtime General Secretary, Dr. Ludger Feldkämper, and the inauguration of his successor, Mrs. Clara María Díaz, were celebrated last September with a small festive act in Stuttgart, not far from the site of the General Secretariat of the CBF. Dr. Bettina Eltrop, a representative of the Katholisches Bibelwerk (German Bible Association), Stuttgart, took part in this celebration and recorded her personal impressions of the event for the readers of this Bulletin.*

21 September 2000 in Stuttgart: a gray, rainy day in autumn. "Are the heavens weeping for sorrow or for joy?" – we were all joking when we arrived. For sorrow, because Ludger Feldkämper is leaving the General Secretariat of the CBF in Stuttgart, and for joy, because Clara María is taking his place – these emotions of the heavens were indeed shared by many of the guests from all over the world who had come together for the farewell to Dr. Ludger Feldkämper as General Secretary and the inauguration of his successor to this office, Mrs. Clara María Díaz, S.S.L.

Very much in the style of Ludger and Clara María – and of the entire Catholic Biblical Federation – there was no pompous festive act, but rather a substantive and lovingly organized celebration with much room for personal contacts, for expressions of gratitude, for recalling the past and looking forward to the future work of the Federation. There was even room for silence, interiority and moments of contemplative

pause. This was made possible by the chamber music ensemble of the St. Agnes Catholic Girls' High-school in Stuttgart. The students performed pieces by Händel and Schütz with a passion and perfection that enthused all present. Moreover they represented an age-group that was otherwise lacking among the guests, even though it plays a vital role in biblical pastoral work, namely, the youth.

Numerous addresses and greetings documented the work-style and accomplishments of Dr. Ludger Feldkämper: networking was a major topic of discussion, as was the establishment of strong connecting links between various members and continents, and the exchange of materials and points of view that lend new impetus to different work situations on the scene of action. Appreciation was also frequently expressed for Ludger Feldkämper's ability to address people personally, to urge their collaboration and to show a commitment for the balancing of different points of view - all of

which qualities also became evident in his own address.

But before melancholy could spread too far, the speech of the new General Secretary, Clara María Díaz and the greetings of various supporting organizations such as that of Bruno Rehm for the Divine Word Missionaries or that of Barbara Pauli for the funding agencies were signaling that the committed work would be carried on with courage, spirit and new perspectives. Clara María Díaz signaled in her address that the Bible reading of the poor and the option for the poor and the marginalized, to which the CBF knows it is obligated, would be given great weight in the future work of the Federation. Barbara Pauli from Missio München compared the CBF to a house that is well built, but at the same time some of its rooms are in need of furnishing. She said she hoped that Mrs. Díaz would be able to furnish rooms for women and children and also to give some thought to the interior decorating of rooms for Afri-



ca. For all of these projects she wished the new General Secretary success and also promised the financial support of her agency for this work.

A further new perspective for the work of the CBF is the fact that Fr. Ludger Feldkämper is not going to be lost all together to the networking of the CBF, but intends to continue to collaborate at one of its junctures, namely in the Subregion

of Rome, following a well-deserved sabbatical year.

Finally, the great significance of the Bible for concrete pastoral work was emphasized both by Bishop Wilhelm Egger, the president of the CBF and the newly ordained bishop of the Diocese of Rottenburg Stuttgart, Dr. Gebhardt Fürst, who also promised to commit with new intensity to the work of the biblical-pastoral ministry.

With so many new perspectives everyone seemed happy at the end: Clara María Díaz is the new General Secretary in Stuttgart who can certainly bring new impetus to the work, and also Fr. Ludger Feldkämper will continue to work for the Federation. At the end, all were agreed: heaven had indeed been weeping for joy.

(Transl.: L. Maluf)



## Service to the Word - Service to Hope

**Paper of Wilhelm Egger, Bishop of Bolzano-Bressanone,  
President of the Catholic Biblical Federation**

**T**he philosopher Immanuel Kant formulated the fundamental human question as follows: "What can I know, what can I hope for, what must I do, who am I?" We are issued the challenge: "always be ready to give an explanation to anyone who asks you for a reason for your hope" (1 Peter 3:15).

### 1. The Holy Scripture - Book of Hope

Our service to the Word of Scripture is primarily a service to hope. What

I mean is that the Bible is from its first page to its last a book of hope, a book of promise and fulfillment. Time and again we are shown how Israel and the Church assume renewed confidence and move forward as a pilgrim people. The very last word of Holy Scripture is likewise an expression of hope: "Come, Lord Jesus" (Rev 22:20b).

### 2. Hope for the Third Millennium

The symbolic number 2000 causes us to reflect on the future. What is

our place within the circle of those who wish to shape the future? I am convinced that we Christians, for whom the Bible is the word of life, have something to contribute to the third millennium.

### Listening to the Word of God is a good foundation-stone

Listening to the Word of God is a good foundation-stone for the construction of the house that is the Church, as well as humanity, at the beginning of the third millennium. In an address to his Polish compa-



triots the Holy Father addressed an invitation to all, on 6 June 1999 in Pelplin, to march forward into the new millennium with the Gospel in hand:

"Happy are those who hear the Word of God and keep it'. If, on the threshold of the third millennium, we ask how the coming times will be, we must also raise the question about the foundation for this house that will be completed by the future generations. This is why our generation must build wisely for the future. He builds wisely who listens to the word of Jesus, and fulfills it too."

### **Bible - inspired and inspiring**

I outlined my own conviction in my article on the European Synod (5 October, 1999) on the Word of God as a source of inspiration for Europe. But this applies as well to the development in the whole world: the inspired Word of God can still provide inspiration today:

"The Bible can give Europe and the continents a soul by helping to discover those values that Europe and the continents especially need at the present moment: as it confronts divisions, nationalistic movements, and intractable conflicts the Word of God issues an invitation to reconciliation; in a world that is being ever more dramatically torn apart the Word of God creates community and helps to overcome religious, social and other barriers; in a time of ongoing cultural transformation and great insecurity the Word of God provides answers to the most profound questions.

Two tasks result from these considerations for the biblical apostolate:

- In religious education more attention should be paid to a better knowledge of the Bible as Word of God for humanity, but also as a specific "great norm" for culture;
- Commitment to the Jubilee Year of the Lord, to debt remission for the peoples;

- In the ecumenical sphere, the Bible, whose interpretation has, in the past, been an occasion for divisions, can become the most effective aid in the reconciliation of the churches (as the famous Protestant exegete Jülicher said at the beginning of the 20th century)."

### **3. The Bible - Symbol of Hope in the Holy Year**

For the Jubilee Year 2000 the Bible will be one of the symbols of the Holy Year, alongside the conventional symbols (pilgrimages, holy doors, indulgences) and alongside a whole series of new emphases (love of neighbor, examination of conscience, testimony of faith witnesses).

The Holy Scripture is one of the great symbols for the Holy Year because it was given a particularly prominent role in the ceremony of the opening of the holy doors in Rome and in the dioceses. The opening of the Holy Year in the dioceses was characterized by the fact that with the entrance into the Cathedrals the Holy Scripture was given a certain liturgical prominence. At the opening of the holy doors in Rome, John Paul II says in *Incarnationis Mysterium* 8: As we cross the threshold the Pope shows the Holy Gospel to the Church and to the world as the source of life and of hope for the coming third millennium.

### **4. Jesus Pedagogy of Hope for crises of society and Church**

Jesus himself gives an example, in that he gives the disciples an answer to the question about the hope that filled him. Among those who followed Jesus there arose questions regarding hope as many of Jesus' followers went away. This amounted to nothing short of a community crisis - today we would speak of a church crisis. Now the pedagogy of Jesus comes to light. In view of his disciples' doubts, disappointments and frustration, the

question of hope is posed for Jesus. Jesus is the teacher of his disciples, and he has also a pedagogy of his own. His manner of speaking is simple and vivid; he takes his parables from real-life situations. They are narratives and stories that arouse confidence and teach how a person can gain trust.

Lothar Zenetti describes this pedagogy of hope and its success in the following words:

**Water from the well,  
bread,  
a farmer who sows,  
a wedding,  
the grain of mustard,  
the fig tree,  
the grape-vine,  
the sheep,  
a lost coin,  
a little leaven, a mass of dough,  
a net full of fish,  
oh Jesus - this was all you needed,  
back then,  
and the simple people,  
understood the truth,  
that lies in things and  
that lies behind things.**

Jesus himself is a sign of hope through his death and resurrection. Jesus is himself a commentary on the saying about the growing of the sown seed. He understands himself as a grain of wheat, and he says of himself: "unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains just a grain of wheat; but if it dies, it produces much fruit" (John 12:24).

Service to the Word also means translating for our times Jesus' great words of hope. The hope with which Jesus was filled he expressed in the words: Kingdom of God, and Son of Man.



The expression "Kingdom of God" implies an action of God: God himself enters actively into human history, and he transforms this history of suffering and negativity into one of wholeness and salvation in which he graces us with his presence. The experience with the earthly Jesus communicates a foretaste of the heavenly meal.

The expression "Son of Man" (Dan 7) is likewise a word of hope according to the Jewish tradition. At the end of time, man will triumph over the wild animals like the bear, the lion, etc. and Israel receives its vindication. Jesus sees his own fate and his own hope embodied in this Son of Man.

According to Luke 4, Jesus inaugurates God's great year of favor. The Jubilee implies a transformation of existing relationships.

## 5. Our Service to the Word and the Pedagogy of Hope

Cardinal Carlo Maria Martini wrote me in a letter: "... at this turn of the millennium .. we must... join a loyalty to ancient tradition with responsiveness to new problems. It is a matter of knowing how to draw from Scripture that personal nourishment and consolation that are required to confront the difficult

problems of the society and the Church of today".

Service to the Word has to do with hope and encouragement. Scripture can make us hopeful people, people of encouragement. Paul writes: "whatever was written previously was written for our instruction, that by endurance and by encouragement of the scriptures we might have hope" (Rom 15:4).

Among the tasks for biblical-pastoral ministry I would like to name the following:

We must view our preaching as an opportunity to expound this line of hope that runs through the whole of Holy Scripture as the story of God with humanity that we can absolutely rely upon. The way of Jesus is itself also a story of hope, a story of the grain of wheat.

We must unlock Jesus' great words of hope and disclose the hope potential that they conceal. We must view the message of hope in the perspective of the larger and smaller hopes of today.

Let our Scriptural reading be a search for the grounds of hope. This corresponds in the traditional method of the search for the fourfold meanings of Scripture to the fourth step, the anagogical interpre-

tation. This fourth step of *lectio divina* shows the way to glory. It seems to me that in our times more than ever this last step is important. We must see the grounds for hope. Such a vision goes with a kind of psychological health that is needed in society, but also in the Church. It is possible to become fixated on the negative side of life, but we can also opt to make an effort to perceive the grounds of hope.

I close with a citation from Cardinal Carlo Maria Martini from the paper he read at the European Synod. "As I listened to the various presentations of the last few days", he said, "I too had a dream, indeed a number of dreams. I will recall three of them ... Above all the dream that, through an ever greater familiarity, on the part of European men and women, with Sacred Scripture, read and prayed alone, in groups and in communities, we will see a revival of that experience of fire in the heart enjoyed by the two disciples on the road to Emmaus. This reminds me of what has already been said by Bishop Egger of Bolzano-Bressanone. My own experience too leads me to believe that the Bible, read and prayed, in particular by the young, is the book of the future for the European continent".

(Transl.: L. Maluf)





## Address of Dr. Daniel Kosch

### Moderator of the Executive Committee

**Honorable Bishops,  
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,  
Dear Friends of the Catholic Biblical Federation,**

I am most grateful to all of you for having taken the time to celebrate today an important transition in the history of the Catholic Biblical Federation: the farewell to Fr. Ludger Feldkämper, svd, and the assumption of the office of General Secretary by Ms. Clara María Díaz. We all know that transitions in life are exciting, but also delicate moments. This is why in times of transition signs of God's nearness are instituted and festivities that foster community are celebrated: with Baptism at a birth, with a wedding at the entrance into the partnership of marriage, but also with ribbons that are ceremoniously cut with the opening of a new bridge, and many other symbolic actions. Our ceremony today is such a symbolic event.

The Catholic Biblical Federation, the word-wide fellowship of biblical associations and biblical-pastoral institutions, committed itself at the last Plenary Assembly in Hong Kong to more active "networking". This implies that the Federation understands itself – very much in the sense of modern media technology, but also along the lines of the *koinonia* of the earliest Christian

communities – as a "network": international and multilingual, transcending all national borders and bringing the most diverse people together as hearers and doers of the Word.

If a net is to be strong enough to support a load it must have not only many threads and meshes, but also strong junctions, with load handling capacity. One of these junctions of world-wide biblical work is the Bible city of Stuttgart. Even if Stuttgart does not owe this designation to the CBF, the name is confirmed by its presence. Stuttgart, and in a broader sense the German-speaking world are important for the CBF not only as the seat of its General Secretariat, but also because in this realm reside many of its friends and benefactors, as well as the majority of those funding agencies which have been responsible not only for the financial support of the CBF, but also for the creation in many countries, through their world-wide project work, of the conditions necessary for any effective biblical ministry at all.

The junction point of the CBF network is the General Secretariat of

Stuttgart, but it is this not only with respect to technology and organization: what have been and remain decisive are the human contacts – communication regarding who will do what, where, when and how. It is the most important task of the General Secretary and his or her collaborators to stretch these threads into all the world, to maintain their viability, to weave them into meaningful and connected operational units. It has been the great accomplishment of Ludger Feldkämper, to whom we officially say farewell today as General Secretary, that he worked for fifteen years putting together this CBF network, that he supported it, breathed new life into it time and time again and very significantly enlarged it. This networking involved innumerable contacts, countless flight hours, meetings, individual appointments, letters, telephone calls, faxes and e-mails.

The Plenary Assemblies that take place every six years can likewise be viewed as "junctions" in the life of the CBF. Ludger Feldkämper put a lasting mark on the Plenary Assembly of Bogotá in 1990 and that of Hong Kong in 1996. Two themes



of relevance both before and after the meetings and of a significance that transcends the CBF itself were the focal point of these meetings: the reading of the Bible in context and the reading of the Bible in dialogue. These two emphases also characterize the style of the work of the parting General Secretary: a great interest in and a high sensitivity for the concrete circumstances in which work with the Bible takes place. And a deep theological, but also human respect for the variety of people and institutions that work together in the CBF. This attentiveness to concrete and unique situations and this readiness for dialogue led to a very conscientious and careful leadership style: he remained totally immune from attempts at centralization, authoritarian conduct or technocratic rule.

It is hardly possible, in a few sentences, to express the thanks that the Federation owes to Ludger Feldkämper for his immeasurable work. So I will borrow a sentence from the Apostle Paul, who had a task in his communities throughout the whole Roman imperial world similar to that of Ludger Feldkämper in the CBF. Paul wrote to his beloved community in Philippi: "I give thanks to my God at every remembrance of you, praying always with joy in my every prayer for all of you" (Phil 1:3-4). May these lines, which we have sung in English at the end of so many CBF meetings be with you on your way, Ludger: We too – the many women and men, bishops, priests, religious and lay persons, all those everywhere in the world who are involved or interested in the Bible and in exegesis, and especially those who bear responsibility in the various committees of the CBF and who have experienced the joy of the Federation meetings – we all thank our God every time we think of you. And of course we will also accompany you with joy in prayer as you enter a new segment of life that will presumably take you

to Rome after a well-deserved sabbatical period, where you will again join the great network of the CBF – as coordinator of the Subregion in that location.

During Ludger Feldkämper's time in office the Catholic Biblical Federation has become more Catholic, i.e. more comprehensive and more open. It is now less Eurocentric, and in Asia and Latin America it is notably more vibrant and of greater significance than it is in our latitude. It no longer finds members and collaborators primarily among clerics and religious, but increasingly also within lay circles, and especially women. The Federation also gives more attention to the fact that the Bible itself is an extremely varied book and that a plurality of approaches to the Bible is an enrichment for "the interpretation of the Bible in the Church" (cf. also the document of the Pontifical Biblical Commission devoted to this topic).

It is fully in line with this new openness, which is Catholic in the real sense of the word and is rooted in the best and most ancient tradition of the Church, that the choice for the new occupant of the position of General Secretary has fallen on Ms. Clara María Díaz from Colombia. She is the first representative of the lands of the South, the first woman and the first lay person in this office. At the same time, she is highly qualified for this task: through biblical studies and publications, through personal experience with biblical ministry and through her effective leadership of the coordinating office of the CBF in Latin America. Clara María took part in the Plenary Assemblies in both Bogotá and Hong Kong and she knows the CBF above all from the perspective of an active member. This perspective on the work of the CBF from the point of view of a very lively, but materially often poor member will bring new impetus to the work in the General Secretariat. And her experience in dealing with tight financial resour-

es will also undoubtedly come in handy.

The good wishes and the many expectations that accompany you, Clara María, as you enter upon this new and exciting, but also not always easy task I would like to express by means of a few words taken from Psalm One: "Happy the woman whose joy is the law of the Lord; God's law she studies day and night; she is like a tree planted near streams of water, that yields its fruit in season. Whatever she does will prosper."

As a token of thanks for the services accomplished and for the readiness to take on this new task, I would like to present a simple fountain-pen to Ludger Feldkämper and Clara María Díaz. Writing is, after all, one of the important tasks of a General Secretary. That both of you receive the same model stands for continuity and tradition; the different handwriting of the recipients will cover transformation and pluralism. Both dimensions are important for the work of the CBF, which is presently preparing for its next Plenary Assembly, whose principal theme is the effect of social, religious, biblical and inner-ecclesial pluralism on the biblical-pastoral ministry. Let me conclude with the biblical motto taken from Psalm 16 "You show me the ways of life" in the form of a prayer and a wish: "Show, o God, the ways of life and to life to Ludger, to Clara María, to the CBF and to us all!"

I thank you for your attentiveness.







**Excerpt from the Speech  
of Fr. Dr. Ludger Feldkämper  
CBF General Secretary from 1986 - 2000**

**Dear Guests and Friends,**

Dr. Kosch spoke of "networking" as an important and relevant aspect of the Federation. In line with this remark, I would like to illustrate with a few examples of "networking" the work of the Federation in which we are all somehow involved or of which we are contributing members.

I hope that it will also become clear through these examples that in the Federation – particularly in positions of responsibility – it is not merely a matter of management. A characteristic element in the Bible apostolate or the biblical-pastoral ministry is joy in the Word of God. Others have noticed this, and it has also been my own constant experience. Time and again I have observed that the Word of God can kindle a glow. We called our Bible seminar in the Philippines "Hearts on fire"! This experience has always encouraged and inspired me in a work that is not always easy; and for this as well as for many other blessings I am most grateful, as are many others.

I would also like to make clear that all the Bible work in the Federation, all the "networking" is not merely a matter of our own doing. One could think this was the case if one were

to focus simply on the implementation of programs and ideas. But these things are but one side of the life of the Federation. The other side is what has not been planned, what was not foreseen, the things that have happened as it were spontaneously. How beautiful it would be, looking back at our past, if we could exclaim in amazement with the Psalmist: "This is the Lord's doing; it is wonderful in our eyes" (Ps 118:23).

I would like to point to four events within the Federation in the months of August, September and October that illustrate how the word takes its course, how people are on the way with this word, how out of small beginnings, often in the form of words and encounters that appear accidental, something arises that can only be compared with the tiny mustard seed and the imposing tree in the parables of Jesus.

A first example: in May of this year Mrs. Díaz and I took part in a Basic Bible Seminar in Hong Kong that was offered by the Filipino immigrant workers for their fellow-countrywomen in service as house maids. Almost half of the Catholic population of Hong Kong consists of Filipinos. The Basic Bible Semi-

nar was offered already for the 50th time among the Hong Kong immigrant workers in August of this year. This Basic Bible Seminar was started in the Philippines. A Filipino Benedictine sister who had worked for long years in the basic communities, felt the need to make available for simple people an introduction to the Bible and a method that would enable them to have a vital contact with the Bible, especially with the readings of the Sunday liturgy, in a prayerful community setting. The course was worked out in the Bible Center named after John Paul I in the northern Philippines – the first associate member of the Federation in the Philippines.

The success of this course was astounding; it was immediately translated into several Filipino languages and dialects and became known outside of the Philippines through the efforts of Filipino missionaries and at meetings of the Catholic Biblical Federation.. At the present time the course – in its original draft or in a form adapted to local situations – has been translated into over 20 languages. The guest worker women in Hong Kong who inscribe for this course make a commitment to give up their only free day in the





week, for a five week period. For the team this sacrifice is almost a permanent condition, because the seminars with 40-50 participants are almost always fully booked. Enthusiastic reports on this course are reaching us, e.g., from as far away as the Congo! – One example that illustrates the work of the Federation – and the "networking" the Federation makes possible.

A second example: in Ghana, since the beginning of this month, a forty-day DEI VERBUM course has been in progress. It is designed for men and women – lay, religious, priests – who involve themselves in Bible work as animators and promoters. This course is being offered for the first time in Ghana and is being conducted by an associate member of the Federation. The course has been given five times already in Harare, Zimbabwe and once in Angola. So Ghana is trying out something that has already been a success in other parts of Africa.

These forty-day courses are an offshoot of the four-month English-speaking DEI VERBUM courses that the Federation has organized twelve times already in Nemi, near Rome. Among the 170 participants in the Plenary Assembly in Hong Kong, about 20 were graduates of the DEI VERBUM courses who are now responsibly engaged in the Bible work of their home countries.

A third example: from 6-8 October a Biblical Colloquium will take place on the theme "La pastorale biblique au carrefour des cultures" (biblical-pastoral ministry at the crossroads of the cultures). It is on the topic of the Word of God and Bible work in the pluralistic world; the topic of theological reflection on the role and value of Bible work in the Church and the world of today. Workshops with similar concerns have already been conducted in two completely different contexts – for South Asia in Bangalore, India and for South East Asia in Band-

ung, Indonesia. These and other workshops serve as preparation for the next Plenary Assembly which will take place in Beirut, Lebanon in September of 2002. It will be exciting to compare the results of these workshops at the Plenary Assembly.

A final example: in Sydney, from 13-18 October 2000 another event will take place which is not making headlines, but which in its after-effects will perhaps not take second place to the Olympic games: the sixth meeting of the United Chinese Catholic Biblical Associations (UCCBA). The idea of this merger was born in 1985 at the first pan-Asiatic Bible meeting of the CBF. Chinese participants from Hong Kong, Singapore and Taiwan decided to pursue the reading of the Bible in a Chinese context, from a Chinese perspective, to profit from the tradition of the reading of classical Chinese writings.

The UCCBA was founded in Taiwan in 1987 and immediately affiliated as an associated member with the Catholic Biblical Federation. Besides the Bible associations, its members include, among others, communities of foreign Chinese people in Malaysia, Indonesia, Australia, the USA, and Canada. From the start they made every effort to maintain contact with the mainland, which they have increasingly been able to do. The UCCBA could come into existence and develop because the Franciscans (Studium Biblicum Franciscanum) – also an associated member of the Federation – had done some good preparatory work. There have been many interesting complications that make it look in hindsight as though everything was planned invisibly!

These, dear friends of the CBF, are a few of the highlights from the life of the Catholic Biblical Federation – meeting with the Word through Holy Scripture, listening to one another, exchanging experiences,

common dreams and discovery of new horizons and possibilities. I am extremely grateful to have been graced with this experience of 16 years.

I am grateful to God, whose providence led me to the CBF. I am grateful also to all my fellow workers, women and men. From the beginning it was clear to me that my work in the Federation would essentially involve co-working, working together, "networking". This is why 16 years ago in Bangalore I introduced myself to you as "your co-worker". And so I wish to thank from the bottom of my heart those here present and also those who are not present today and whom in the last 16 years I have been able to count as my co-workers, travel fellows, companions, yes even friends.

To you, dear Bishop Dr. Gebhard Fürst, I would like to say that we are delighted that you were able – so shortly after your ordination to bishop last Sunday – to come to us today. As Bishop of Rottenburg-Stuttgart you are the protégé of the Catholic Biblical Associations which number among the most important founding members of the CBF. Of course the Federation is not directly under you, but we can certainly expect that, like your predecessor, you will hold a protective hand over the CBF or – if necessary – reach it your helping hand!

Soon there is supposed to be another Synod of Bishops, under the title: "The Bishop, minister of the Gospel of the Jesus Christ for the hope of the world". In view of this Synod, the president of the CBF, Bishop Egger, conducted a survey among the so-called "Bible bishops" on the theme: the preaching ministry of the Bishop and Bible ministry, and he turned over the results to the Secretary of the Synod as a contribution of the Federation. Ever since the 1984 Plenary Assembly in Bangalore, India, the CBF has been pleading for a Synod on



the Word of God and the Holy Scripture in the life of the Church. We are convinced that the interpretation of Scripture is the heart of the new evangelization and of the preaching commission of the whole Church – beginning with the Bishop! It would be a wonderful gift for us, dear Bishop Fürst, if you would support the CBF in this effort.

But I owe the greatest debt of gratitude to Mrs. Clara María Díaz, my successor. We have known each other since the end of the 1980's. I congratulate Mrs. Díaz for her courage in assuming the responsibilities of the office. If she does so with fear and trembling, this only recalls my own feelings of 16 years ago. For this reason, Clara María, I would

like to address one word to you: "Trust!" "Have trust." You do not walk alone, you are not alone - to use the words of a blessing hymn. I thank you all for your patience and attention.

(Transl.: L. Maluf)



### Speech by Lic. Bibl. Clara María Díaz, CBF General Secretary since July 2000

#### Your Excellencies, dear Friends of the Catholic Biblical Federation

Allow me to address you in my native tongue not only for the ease but, above all, the desire to offer a strong symbolic gesture of solidarity with thousands upon thousands of people across Latin America and the Caribbean. These people come into contact each day with the Bible seeking enlightenment from its message and a way of life that is simple yet profound and very human. This message of the good news of mercy and brotherhood in this world of ours where the voice of those who suffer and hunger and thirst for justice can be barely perceived.

You may be asking yourselves right now what a woman from so far away is doing in the chair of Secretary General for the Catholic Biblical

Federation. An adequate response is difficult to express in words just as the experience of faith many times leaves much unexplained to human reason. All I can tell you is that from first coming into contact with the Federation in late 1985, I was interested in its work. Almost without realizing it, I began to get more and more involved in its activities. Almost without realizing it, I began to get more and more involved in its activities. I became increasingly convinced of the importance of the mission conferred on the Federation to offer a space for communication and participation, an opportunity which we should not miss in order to proclaim the Word of God as the source of life and hope for all people.

I'm here before you with the sole purpose of serving, of carrying on blazing the trail in the spirit of those who pioneered it. This trail began over thirty years ago: thirty years of meaningful moments, especially in the Plenary Assemblies. I was among those en route from Bangalore, I was in Bogota and in Hong Kong. I profess a clear awareness of the importance of the Federation's prophetic mission and of the need to be faithful to the newness of the Gospel and of that desire, so divine and so human, of having life and having it to the full. Now we are on our way to Beyrouth, pilgrims in the midst possibilities and senselessness of globalization and of plurality of our postmodern society, but with the certainty of that the



Word we announce is a blessing for all peoples.

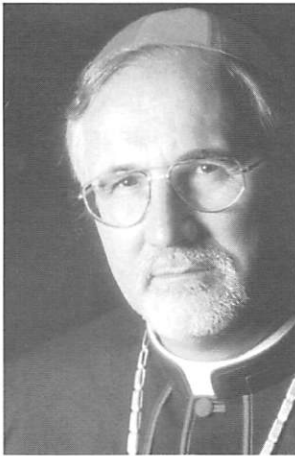
This is truly a moment to thank those who have honored and enriched the Federation with their presence: the founders, Presidents, members of the Executive Committee, and in a very special way, Fr. Ludger Feldkämper whom we honor for his selfless service through-

out these past 16 years. And, so many other people who have in one way or another given their utmost to this task in the main office in Stuttgart, and elsewhere - in the regional branch offices and in all places where the affiliated institutes undertake favoring the admirable pastoral biblical work. To the individuals and groups who have generously contributed to our work and

to all of you who have graced us with your presence on this day of celebration. I not only want to thank you, I'd like to tell you that upon taking on this new challenge, I hope to forever rely on your cooperation, support and friendship.

Thank you very much.

(Transl.: J. Paulin)



### Address delivered by Dr. Gebhard Fürst Bishop of Rottenburg-Stuttgart

**Most Reverend Bishop Egger, very honorable Dr. Kosch, very honorable Fr. Feldkämper, very honorable Mrs. Díaz, honorable Ladies and Gentlemen!**

When I was asked to deliver a greeting on the occasion of this festive act for the discharge of the outgoing Secretary General and the installation of the future Secretary General of the Catholic Biblical Federation, I gladly accepted the invitation. Although at the moment I am still very much involved in the concerns of my newly assumed office as bishop it was important for me to make clear in this way my close personal ties to the Catholic Biblical Federation as well as those of the

Diocese of Rottenburg-Stuttgart. Stuttgart is in fact the Bible city. The two largest historical Bible collections of Germany are found here, as well as the Catholic Biblical Association (Katholisches Bibelwerk). These institutions witness to the central role that Holy Scripture has had not only in Christianity but also in the cultural history of our civilization as a whole, not to mention the Bible's ultimate significance also for the future of our Church and our culture.

Holy Scripture is the foundation and the supreme norm of all Church life. It is this, though, not only in an historical sense, but as the "viva vox", as the living "Word of the living God", in which God wills to address and communicate himself anew to every human being.

It is the goal and the merit of the Catholic Biblical Federation today to search for ways of preaching and pastoral ministry that will enable this living Word to reach people, ever again and in ever new and



more suitable ways, in their various cultures and life contexts "πολυμερ-ωφ και πολυτροπωφ", as the Epistle to the Hebrews puts it. Most recently at the Plenary Assembly in Hong Kong, in 1996, you alluded to the great importance of the biblical-pastoral ministry and of appropriate exegetical, catechetical and homiletic training for our Church. At this Plenary Assembly which stood under the title: "Word of God – Source of Life" you committed yourself and the Church to engage with the people of today, in their concrete life situations "so that the Word of God can become a source of life in their hopes and their uncertainties" (*Final Statement*, 8.2.6).

I consider this to be an absolutely decisive commitment. It is especially important today to lay open and interpret anew the living source of God's Word which in our times of incessant media communication of-

ten threatens to get buried in a mass of superficial verbiage. Today more than ever so many people yearn for a "Word of life". And today, where the supermarket of opinions is so full of cheap offerings, the words of Simon Peter are more timely than ever before: "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life." (Jn 6:68)

The fact is that the Bible, as Immanuel Kant noted, has the "power [...] to ground religion in the human heart" (*Streit der Fakultäten. Werke hg. v. W. Weischedel*, vol. 6A 104). It still has this power today, not as mere letter of course, but as lived and personally witnessed word. As Christians, we are all called to this witness. And we are also all given the capacity for this witness through the gift of the Spirit. Just as God, in the words of Vatican II in its Constitution on Divine Revelation, "for the sake of our salvation wished

to see [his word] confided to the sacred Scriptures", (*Dei Verbum*, 11), so too has he sent us forth to re-broadcast this word for humankind and for their salvation.

It is in this service of salvation that I am engaged as Bishop. This is why I have chosen for the guiding principle of my ministry the phrase from the creed "for our salvation". This could also be taken as a motto for the work in which the members of the Catholic Biblical Federation have for over thirty years been tirelessly engaged in many countries of the world.

I wish to encourage you to continue along this path. I thank you, dear Dr. Feldkämper, for your committed and important work as Secretary General of the Federation. And for you, honorable Mrs. Díaz, I wish God's richest blessings for this task.

(Transl.: L. Maluf)





# THE CBF IN THE INTERNET

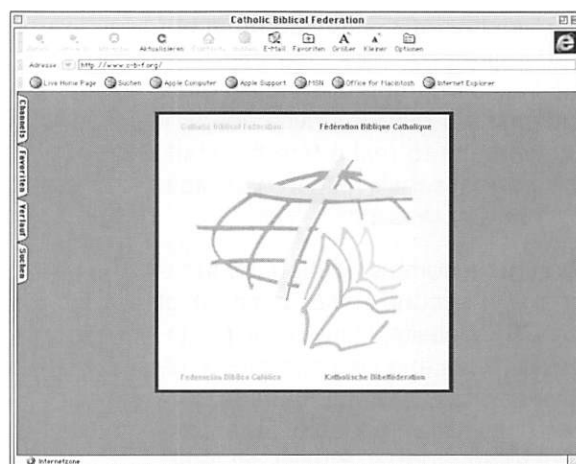
ALEXANDER M. SCHWEITZER

It looked like a hundred meter course at the start, but as the runners arrived at the goal posts it seemed more like a thousand meter course! The runners: fellow-workers in the General Secretariat; the goal: the internet presence of the Catholic Biblical Federation. The race required much conditioning and discipline, but there was also a good support environment: spectators, enthusiasts and specialists, who offered assistance where necessary. At any rate, with the arrival at the goal-line a partial victory has been won.

Since a growing number of member-organizations of the Catholic Biblical Federation are present in the Internet with their own sites, the establishment of a central CBF site was beginning to make more and

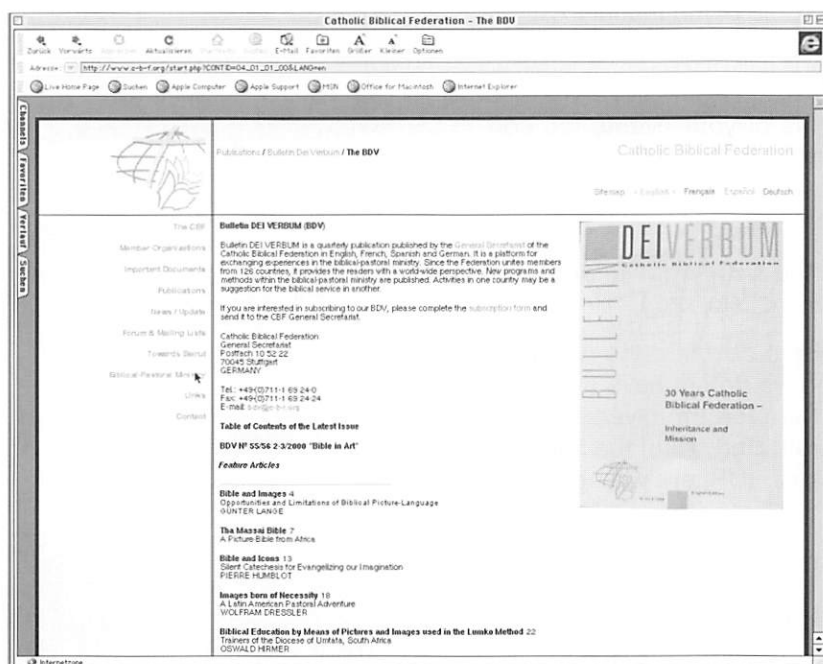
more sense and was becoming increasingly urgent. And since networking, establishing contacts of various kinds, numbers among the most important tasks of the General Secretariat and since many communication lines converge in this office, we decided to take on this task here as well. For the time being only the English language version is available – the completion of the Spanish, French and German language versions will take some more time – nevertheless, this is an important step. So we would like to introduce to you today the official central website of the CBF.

Forums and mailing lists are, among others, important tools for



networking. They depend on dialogue, on everyone working together. The mailing list CBFNEWS is an unmoderated list to which anyone interested in mutual exchange of news and information can contribute. All participants can both receive from and send to the list. The list GSINFO, on the other hand, will supply information from the General Secretariat on a regular basis to all registered members; it is therefore a "one way street". Forums are discussion panels on different themes. Here, as an initial offer, we have set up a general forum and a forum devoted specifically to themes connected with the upcoming Plenary Assembly. In these forums English will be the primary language, but other languages are of course welcome as well. The linguistic variety of the CBF comes to expression in the forums: for the time being, in the Forum français and the Foro español. In all the forums, files can be sent as well. It is our hope that these forums will arouse your interest and thereby become an effective means for a lively and world-wide exchange in the CBF.

The fostering of networking and communication should also serve the member data base, whose access data members of the CBF can





order through e-mail. Together with the access data you will receive also a brief "instruction manual". Links to the websites of our member institutions and commented and categorized links to other relevant sites on the Bible and on biblical-pastoral ministry invite users of our website to make this the starting page for their research in biblical ministry research.

Alongside communication, information is a second major concern of the CBF Website. Many of the fundamental texts and also numerous relevant articles have been made conveniently downloadable in a text-processing format. Finally, an index to the Bulletin Dei Verbum, arranged according to various categories, will enable a rapid search for themes, authors, and editions of our quarterly. In the "Publications"-menu you will find a list of the publications of CBF members. The menu item "Biblical-Pastoral Ministry" in the English language edition of the website, in addition to other interesting texts, offers information on biblical-pastoral courses and methods.

Because of its significance for the life of the Catholic Biblical Federation, the upcoming sixth Plenary Assembly of Beirut in 2002 has not only a forum devoted to it but also a major menu entry. It already contains important information on the ongoing preparations for the meeting, as well as texts on the theme of the Plenary Assembly, and it will be regularly updated and expanded.

We have abstained from motion and sound on the website, with consideration for the different levels of technical equipment of the users. Color and alternation, on the other hand, are a given, because of the diversity of Internet presence of our members, who can of course be reached from the central website. Much in the line of format and structure will change; but above all, the CBF Website will grow in content. We count on your collaboration here.



This can mean a variety of things:

- participation in the mailing lists: e.g., send interesting information to the CBFNEWS list. Please remember: to participate you must register (subscription form);
- participation in the forums: you can enter the discussions on themes that are already being hotly debated, or suggest new themes;
- send us interesting contributions on the theme of the Plenary Assembly or on themes related to the CBF generally;
- notify us of your events (cf. contact form), inform us about your own or other pertinent sites on the Internet;
- study the CBF Website and send us criticisms; etc. etc.

"And where do I find the website?" Here too we do not have a final answer – here too the diversity of the CBF is reflected. All of the following addresses (URLs) will get you there:

[www.c-b-f.org](http://www.c-b-f.org)

[www.febic.org](http://www.febic.org)

[www.catholic-biblical-federation.org](http://www.catholic-biblical-federation.org)

Our New Year's resolution for the website - but for other things as well: whatever stands the test of time will be kept, whatever does not, will be discarded without hesitation. And good, new ideas will be adopted, with both moderation and courage! Your interest and collaboration will be most welcome.

(Transl.: L. Maluf)







## Journeying towards Beirut 2002: Publications and Activities of the Subregions and Members of the Catholic Biblical Federation

*In this issue, we want to introduce publications and materials, but also activities of our members that are explicitly related to the upcoming Plenary Assembly. We heartily urge our members to make available to us their information and materials published in connection with the preparations for the Plenary Assembly. It is our intention to advertise this information, in our whole network consisting of 307 member-institutions in 126 countries, through the Bulletin Dei Verbum and the CBF Website.*

**Guías para una *lectio divina* del libro de los Hechos de los Apóstoles [Introduction to a *lectio divina* of the Acts of the Apostles]** (chaps. 1–8). Special edition for the celebration of Bible Month.

*Lectio Divina* is an outstanding method of reflection on and spiritual reading of the Bible. A growing number of people are going back to this method of Bible

reading, which is part of the Church's tradition. The aim of this introduction to a prayerful reading of the Bible in Spanish is to contribute to a personal encounter with the Word of God - as an individual or in community. The material was originally published in the journal *Palabra Hoy*.

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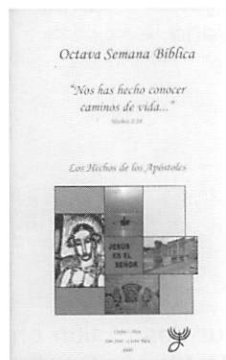
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**"Nos has hecho conocer caminos de vida" (Hch 2, 28) - Octava Semana Bíblica ["He shows us the Ways of Life" (Acts 2:28) - Eighth Bible Week]**. Equipo CERJUC – SION

Material in the Spanish language for an encounter with the Word of God in Church communities on the occasion of the Bible Week. The volume contains an introduction to

the cultural-historical context of the Acts of the Apostles, instructions for ten encounters with central themes of this biblical book and a series of didactic aids for the pastoral worker (vocabulary; historical-geographical panorama of the "Way in the time of the Holy Spirit"; practical tips for the celebration of Bible Week).



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**Curso bíblico sobre los Hechos de los Apóstoles [Bible Course on the Acts of the Apostles]**: this course was organized by the Asociación Bíblica Católica Arquidiocesana de Panamá in connection with the celebration of the Bible

Week of September 2000. More than 800 persons attended the lecture by P. Pablo Richard, an expert in biblical-pastoral ministry in Latin America.

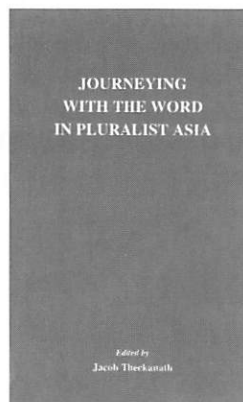




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**Journeying with the Word in pluralist Asia.** Third South Asian Workshop of the Catholic Biblical Federation. NBCLC, Bangalore, India 2000.

This little booklet published by Jacob Theckanath contains the papers of the Third



South Asian Workshops in preparation for the coming Plenary Assembly of the Catholic Biblical Federation. The focus is the question of the challenges for the biblical-pastoral ministry in view of the cultural and religious pluralism of Asia.

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**14. National Workshop of the Episcopal Commission for Biblical Apostolate** - ECBA, Philippines. From 19 to 23 February 2001 the 14<sup>th</sup> National Workshop will take place in Numancia, Aklan, in the Philippines. It stands under the title of the next Plenary Assembly of the CBF: The Word of God - A Blessing for all Peoples - "You show me the Ways of Life" (Acts 2:28 / Ps 16:11).

The program of this workshop leaves plenty of room for group-work, discussion and prayer, in addition to lectures by experts. Special workshops will be devoted, among others, to the themes: the Youth and the Word of God; the Laity and the Word of God; the Media and the Word of God; the Word of God and the Business World.

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**3. Southeast Asian Workshop in Bandung, Indonesia.** The Third Southeast Asian Workshop took place from 9 to 14 May 2000 in Bandung, Indonesia. The theme: "The Word of God – a Blessing for all Peoples – Journeying together with the Word in a Pluralistic World – from a Southeast Asian Perspective".

The major articles are devoted to the missionary dimension of the Church, to interreligious dialogue, to the challenges of pluralism in a rapidly changing world and to the question of inculturation of the Christian Faith in Asia.

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**La pastorale biblique au carrefour des cultures - Colloque de pastorale biblique [Biblical-Pastoral Ministry at the Crossroads of Human Cultures - Colloquium of Biblical-Pastoral Ministry]**, Paris, 6-8 October 2000.

This colloquium was organized by the Latin European Subregion of the CBF and marks an important stage of reflection

on biblical-pastoral ministry. Out of the discussions came the formulation of a few fundamental challenges for everyone involved in biblical-pastoral activity in the context of the modern, pluralistic world - specifically too by way of contributing to the preparations for the upcoming Plenary Assembly in Lebanon.



*There follows a list of further materials on the Acts of the Apostles that have been recommended by members of the Catholic Biblical Federation:*

El don del Espíritu a la Iglesia. El testimonio de los Hechos de los Apóstoles. Santiago Guijarro Oporto, en La Palabra Hoy, FEBIC-LA, Santafé de Bogotá, 1998.

El Espíritu Santo en las comunidades. V Semana Bíblica Nacional. Folleto del asesor y Guía de reuniones. Conferencia Episcopal Ecuatoriana. Area del Magisterio de la Iglesia, Quito, 1997.

Magos, Possuídos e exorcitas. Uma experiência religiosa popular em Éfeso, segundo Atos dos Apóstolos 19, 11-20. Leopoldo Uribe Cruz, svd. Dissertação de Pós-Graduação Ciências da Religião, Universidad Metodista de São Paulo, 1999.

El impulso del Espíritu. Guía para una lectura comunitaria de los Hechos de los Apóstoles. La Casa de la Biblia España. Verbo Divino, Comisión Episcopal de Pastoral Bíblica de México, Federación Bíblica Católica, México, 1998.

Irrésistible parole. Les Actes des Apôtres. Joseph Stricher. Col. Evangile paroles de vie. Action Catholique Générale Féminine, Paris 2000.

"Verstehst du denn, was du da liest? - "Comprends-tu vraiment ce que tu lis?" Workbook on Acts 8 (the meeting of the Ethiopian official with Philip) in German

and French editions, published for Ecumenical Sunday in Switzerland. Zurich; Biennia 2000.

Pokorny P., "Theologie der lukanischen Schriften", Göttingen, 1998.

Wilhelm Egger, "With all boldness and without hindrance" - Lectio divina of Acts 28, 16-31 (BDV Nr. 33, 1994, pp. 13-15).

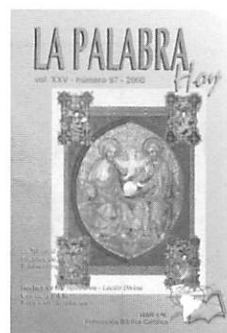
Javier Saravia, S. J. (Mexico), "El Camino de la Iglesia a partir de los Hechos de los Apóstoles".

Pablo Richard (Costa Rica, published Centro Bíblico Verbo Divino, Quito, Ecuador): "El Movimiento de Jesús. Una interpretación liberadora de los Hechos de la (?) Apóstoles".

Daniel Marguerat, "La première histoire du christianisme" / Les Actes des Apôtres / Lectio divina 180 Paris - Genève 1999 (Publisher: Cerf - Labor et Fides).

Six Pastoral Letters published by the Patriarchs, of which one is "Le mystère de l'Église" (pertinent to the question of the plurality of the Churches in the Middle East).

La Palabra Hoy, 97-2000: Mes de Biblia - Hechos de los Apóstoles - Lectio Divina.





The Catholic Biblical Federation (*CBF*) is a world-wide association of Catholic organizations committed to ministry to the Word of God. At the present time, the *CBF* membership includes 90 full members and 217 associate members coming from a total of 126 countries.

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

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

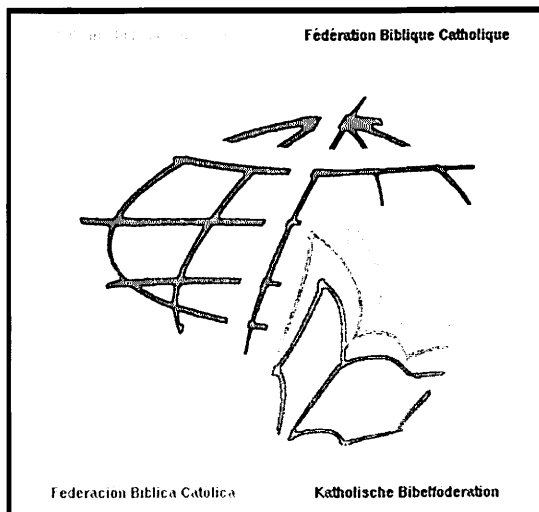
In particular, the *CBF* works toward the promotion of the reading of the Bible within the context of concrete life situations and the training of ministers of the Word in this direction.

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

**Wilhelm Egger, Bishop of Bozen-Brixen, President of the CBF**

[www.c-b-f.org](http://www.c-b-f.org)

[www.febic.org](http://www.febic.org)



## THE CBF IN THE INTERNET

From now on you will find the central  
Website of the Catholic Biblical Federation  
at this address

[www.catholic-biblical-federation.org](http://www.catholic-biblical-federation.org)