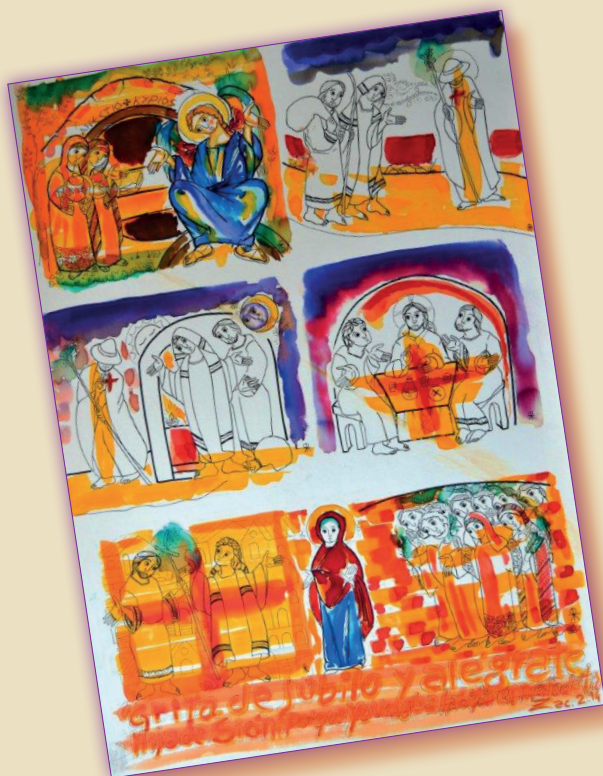
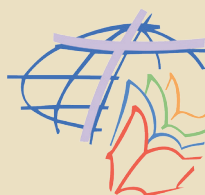


GUIDELINES FOR THE BIBLICAL INSPIRATION OF THE ENTIRE PASTORAL MINISTRY OF THE CHURCH



CBF Documents 1



**Guidelines for
the biblical inspiration of the entire pastoral
ministry of the Church
for Latin America and Caribbean**

Sankt Ottilien 2017

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para América Latina y El Caribe*

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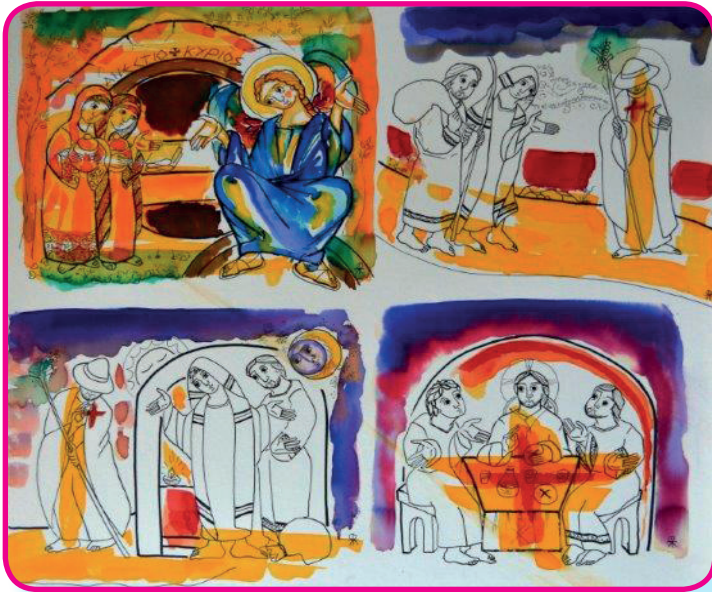
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INTRODUCTION



*All flesh is like grass
And all its glory like the flower of the field;
The grass withers and the flower wilts,
But the Word of the Lord stands forever.
And this is the Word that was proclaimed to you
as Good News.*

(1 Pe 1:24-25; cf. Is 40:6-9)

his biblical quotation forms the conclusion of the Dogmatic Constitution *Dei Verbum* of the Second Vatican Council in 1965, which Pope Benedict XVI also chose to begin his Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Verbum Domini* in 2010, thus establishing a continuity of biblical reflection of last 50 years.

We, as the people of God who are pilgrims in Latin America and the Caribbean, are part of this long and fruitful biblical sojourn. On our continent, a journey of listening, embracing and proclaiming the Word has been enthusiastically promoted. It has been transmitted through catechesis, the reflection of our pastors, through festive celebration, and has come to be reflected in our art and in our creativity.

The Word has helped us to understand reality as a continuation of Salvation History and has inspired the lives and struggles of our community groups.

From the first General Conference of Bishops of Latin American and the Caribbean, gathered in Rio de Janeiro (1955), to the latest in Aparecida (2007), Sacred Scripture has been a constant pastoral concern.

Puebla (1979) recognized that the soul and source of evangelization, of catechesis and of the social teaching of the Church could not be other than Sacred Scripture¹. Santo Domingo (1992), in its Message, in response to the challenge of a New Evangelization, proposed the journey of the Emmaus disciples as a

1 Cf. DC 372, 472, 1001

model of the renewed proclamation of the Good News². Most recently, Aparecida (2007), most recently, besides embracing a biblical focus in its call (for “missionary disciples of Jesus Christ”), proposed a new paradigm for presenting the role of Sacred Scripture in the life and mission of the Church: The Biblical Inspiration of the entire Pastoral Ministry³.

This highlighted the tradition of reflection in the Catholic Biblical Federation (CBF), which, inspired by the experience of Latin American basic ecclesial communities, proposed the Biblical Inspiration of the entire Pastoral Ministry (hereinafter BIPM) to the whole Church at its Plenary Assembly in Bogotá (1990).

Pope Benedict XVI set out for us the goal of BIPM: to demonstrate that “the Church is founded on the Word of God, is born and lives from it”, and “to examine the ordinary activities of Christian communities, in parishes, associations and movements, to see if they are truly concerned with fostering a personal encounter with Christ, who gives himself to us in his Word”⁴.

Finally, Pope Francis, who chaired the Drafting Committee for the final Aparecida Document (AD), reminds us that “all evangelization is based on that Word, listened to, meditated upon, lived, celebrated and witnessed to”⁵. Sacred Scripture is the very source of evangelization.

Consequently, we need to be constantly trained in hearing the Word. The Church does not evangelize unless she constantly lets

2 Cf. DSD 13-26.

3 Cf. AD 248.

4 VD 73.

5 EG 174.

herself be evangelized. It is indispensable that the word of God “be ever more fully at the heart of every ecclesial activity”⁶.

The Church has opted for BIPM as a project that renews its encounter with the person of Christ and the proclamation of the Good News.

The present BIPM Guidelines follow the path of the Word in our continent and seek to offer means of communion and orientation to guide our brothers and sisters of Latin America and the Caribbean to a personal and ecclesial encounter with Jesus Christ, through Sacred Scripture.

We are inspired by the Lucan journey of the Emmaus disciples (*Lk 24:13-36*) and we propose seven signs that reflect the stages of that process: the Way, the Pilgrim, the Scriptures, the House, the Bread, the Heart and the Mission.

Each of these sections will develop the aspects most relevant related to BIPM: the role of the Word of God in the life and mission of the Church; the Latin American and Caribbean context, illuminated by the Word of God; Sacred Scripture and its Christological dimension; the community dimension of the Word of God; its sacramental and liturgical dimension; and the profile of the biblical animator of pastoral life.

These Guidelines attempt to contribute to establishing a new paradigm: the Latin American and Caribbean Church, walking in the light of the Word. We begin by proposing an exercise of *Lectio Divina*, with the guiding text of this document (*Luke 24:13-36*), based on the Jerusalem Bible translation, along with a commentary that seeks to serve a good reading of this text.

We conclude by offering some tools to implement this paradigm in our communities: a practical guide to forming BIPM teams, as a guide for developing an BIPM project. In addition, you will find a historical overview.

Finally, it is worth noting that the Guidelines that you have in your hands is an effort to distil the evolution of a long process driven by CEBITEPAL, together with FEBIC-LAC (the Catholic Biblical Federation Latin America Region). However, we are aware that there are still many elements of the process that will need to develop and mature. Hence the premise is that this is a work in progress (*ad experimentum*) and that all your contributions and suggestions are very welcome.

We are grateful for all the support received in the preparation of these Guidelines and we hope that they will be received in the same spirit of love for the Word of God with which they were written.

We commend this project to the first missionary disciple of the Word of God, Our Lady, who with her “yes” taught us to listen and bring to life the plan of God.

Bishop Juan Espinoza Jiménez
CELAM General Secretary

Fr. Jan Stefanów svd
CBF General Secretary

THE EMMAUS DISCIPLES

Lk 24:13-36

Text and commentary

One of the most popular and beloved stories of the appearances of the risen Lord is that of the Emmaus disciples, and it is here proposed as an itinerary to guide the Biblical Inspiration of the entire Pastoral Ministry (BIPM) Guidelines for our ecclesial communities in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Here below is a commentary on the text, divided into seven scenes, each accompanied by an image that will serve to illuminate each one of the seven steps of these Guidelines.

THE JOURNEY

Lk 24:13-16

24 ¹³*Now that very day two of them were going to a village seven miles from Jerusalem called Emmaus* ¹⁴*and they were conversing about all the things that had occurred.* ¹⁵*And it happened that while they were conversing and debating, Jesus himself drew near and walked with them,* ¹⁶*but their eyes were prevented from recognizing him.*

The narrative of the Emmaus disciples unfolds around the theme of the “Journey” to and from, of travelling and retracing steps. The point of reference is the city of Jerusalem, where the events of the Passion have just taken place. The village of Emmaus marks the turning point.

The evangelist places the disciples immediately in the setting of the journey: “*they were going to a village called Emmaus*” (v. 13). The distance is not long, the village is on the outskirts of Jerusalem.

Luke, writing for a community which does not know Jesus personally, proclaims to them the Risen One, but He is not visibly present to them. Where can they therefore encounter the presence of the Risen One? This question will determine the unfolding of the Emmaus narrative, and in its various stages will present, in narrative form, the “places” to find Jesus. Of course, these “places” are not only for the Emmaus disciples but are also, as disciples, seek to encounter the Risen One.

The first image that appears is the *journey*. Jesus, who had journeyed with his disciples throughout his ministry, once again takes up the journey, as a pilgrim with his disciples, who “*were conversing about all that had happened... they were conversing and debating*” (vv.14-15). The disciples have just witnessed what happened, but they are sad (v.17), because what happened did not meet their expectations.

Now Jesus begins to walk with them, as he had done so many times, “*but their eyes were prevented from recognizing him*” (v.16). The Risen One is not recognized only by physical traits.

There is another more profound dimension that enables or fails to enable that recognition. Here we begin to see that the “new presence” of the Risen One has some unique characteristics that Luke will develop in the narrative.

The journey is a universal symbol of life. Jesus makes his presence felt along the way, in the life of his people, of his disciples, but frequently our eyes are unable to see him.

The eyes that cannot see him are, at the same time, both a sign for our comfort and one of judgment. A comfort, because it highlights for us that often when we cannot perceive him, Jesus indeed is walking along with us. And, it is also an accusation, because we are reproached for our lack of faith and confidence to believe (v. 25) that he is always at our side.

THE PILGRIM

Lk 24:17-24

24 ¹⁷*Jesus asked them, “What are you discussing as you walk along?” They stopped, looking downcast. ¹⁸One of them, named Cleopas, said to him in reply, “Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know of the things that have taken place there in these days?” ¹⁹And he replied to them, “What sort of things?” They said to him, “The things that happened to Jesus the Nazarene, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, ²⁰how our chief priests and rulers both handed him over to a sentence of death and crucified him. ²¹But we were hoping that he would be the one to redeem Israel; and besides all this, it is now the third day since this took place. ²²Some women from our group, however, have astounded us: they were at the tomb early in the morning and did not find Jesus’ body; ²³they came*

back and reported that they had indeed seen a vision of angels who announced that he was alive. ²⁴Then some of those with us went to the tomb and found things just as the women had described, but him they did not see”.

After joining them, after becoming a pilgrim with his disciples, the first thing Jesus does is to take an interest in them. He, who is the Word, does not begin with a discourse but first asks them “*What are you discussing as you walk along?*” (v.17).

The disciples are astonished at the question and in sorrow turn to him: “*Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know of the things that have taken place there in these days?*” (v.18), and Jesus gives them the opportunity to express themselves, to burdens their expectations, their hopes and their woes and frustrations. Jesus patiently listens to all that the disciples have to say.

The disciples narrate simply and clearly the course of Jesus’ life: “*a prophet mighty in word and deed...*” (v.19). These words, on reflection, are in fact a proclamation of the kerygma: *Jesus of Nazareth (...) they crucified him (...) this is the third day (...) they were at the tomb early, they did not find his body (...) angels announced that he was alive*. All the elements of the kerygma are present, but it is a kerygma “without faith”. For the disciples, Jesus had died and there was nothing left to be done.

Here Luke is also indicating that it is possible to know the entire trajectory, the whole story, say the right words, and even become pilgrims right next to Jesus, but that is not enough. Jesus goes out to meet them so they can experience the Risen One, recognize him and proclaim him.

THE SCRIPTURES

Lk 24:25-27

24 ²⁵*Then Jesus said to them, “Oh, how foolish you are! How slow of heart to believe all that the prophets spoke! ²⁶Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and enter into his glory?” ²⁷Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them what referred to him in all the scriptures.*

After the disciples narrate what happened and Jesus listens attentively, He stuns them with these words: *“Oh, how foolish you are! How slow of heart to believe (...)!”* (v.25). From the perspective of the disciples, the death on the cross and the werw been the end of everything. After that, and despite the affirmation by the women, they are depart in sorrow.

They had not yet understood what God was doing through all that had happened, and how in the plan of God the cross was necessary for Jesus to enter into his glory, in eternal communion with God (v.25). That is why Jesus explains everything that referred to him in the Scriptures: “beginning with Moses and all the prophets” (v.26). In the light of God’s suffering servants’ of God’s plan of salvation in the history of Israel, lies the understanding that Jesus’ death on a cross is not a failure but rather the expression of Jesus’ unconditional faithfulness to God and an unprecedented sign of God’s love for the world. Jesus is truly the “Messiah” (the “Christ”), and He is so precisely as the Crucified and Risen One.

The Scriptures reveal the faithfulness of God throughout the entire sojourn of the people of Israel, culminating in the Incarnation, life, death and resurrection of Jesus. As the Scriptures can be read only in the light of faith; that is why the Lord requires that they believe (v.27). By this faith, people are called to trust in God who guides history, and turns it into Salvation History, but not according to human success of his Son on the cross, God will to reveal to humanity the depths of his love for us.

THE HOUSE

Lk 24:28-29

24 ²⁸*As they approached the village to which they were going, he gave the impression that he was going on farther. ²⁹But they urged him, “Stay with us, for it is nearly evening and the day is almost over”. So he went in to stay with them”.*

Up to this point, Jesus has consistently been taking the initiative, he drew near, he became the travelling companion, he explained the Scriptures to them, but when they are near the place where they are going, he leaves it to the two disciples to ask him to stay with them. That is why “*he gave the impression that he was going on farther*” (v. 28). Jesus does not want to impose anything on them; his presence and closeness must be freely sought. Certainly, we might surmise that Jesus would not want to leave them, but he waits for his disciples to be the ones who invite him, who, freely say “*Stay with us!*” (v.29).

This is the turning point of the story, for from this moment everything changes: Jesus, who was the guest, assumes the role of the householder, he sits down, he takes the bread, he pronounces the blessing...

When the disciples voluntarily open their home to Jesus, then He is free to show himself clearly and there he is revealed to them in the breaking of bread.

THE BREAD

Lk 24:30-31

24 ³⁰*And it happened that, while he was with them at table, he took bread, said the blessing, broke it, and gave it to them. ³¹With that their eyes were opened and they recognized him, but he vanished from their sight.*

At table, at the time of eating together, Jesus performs the rite of breaking bread: *“He took bread, said the blessing, broke it, and gave it to them”* (v.30). The repetition of the gestures of the Last Supper (v.19), associated with the messianic context in which he made them at the multiplication of loaves and fish (*Lk 9:16*), reveal the salvific sense of the Passion: Jesus “gives himself up for” and “in favour of” others.

The fact that he uses the same verbs that were uttered at the Last Supper is a pointer to the reader, to us, for it is we who are familiar with these gestures, not the Emmaus disciples, who are not stated to have been at the last Supper. In this way, Luke demonstrates that the “Breaking of Bread”, “Thanksgiving” (=Eucharist) is another of the “places” where we meet the Risen One.

Then they recognize him: *“Their eyes were opened and they recognized him”* (v. 31), but He disappears from their presence, because He has already accomplished his purpose: The two disciples have seen him!.

THE HEART

Luke 24:32

24 ³²*Then they said to each other,
“Were not our hearts burning [within us]
while he spoke to us on the way and opened
the scriptures to us?”*

Their recognizing of Jesus when He broke the bread makes the disciples see their own journey in a different light. Jesus was with them all the time; now they realize it and for that reason they say: *“Were not our hearts burning within us while he spoke to us on the way and opened the scriptures to us?”* (v.32).

The presence of the Lord who explained the Scriptures was felt in their hearts, which burned with the fire of the one who accompanied them on the way.

The journey to the Crucifixion -now grasped in its fullness- has enabled them to recognize the Risen One. And at the same time, the Risen Lord has enabled them to see the meaning of the same one Crucified one. If the relationship of the disciples with Jesus was characterized, up to his death, by his visible presence, they now understand that the Risen One will no longer be visible similarly in their presence, although this does not mean that he is not with them.

In walking with them, Jesus himself introduced them to a new way of encounter with Him, characterized by the certainty that his life has achieved its fullness: *“The Lord has truly been raised!”* (v.34).

THE COMMUNITY

Lk 24:33-35

24 *³³So they set out at once and returned to Jerusalem where they found gathered together the eleven and those with them ³⁴who were saying, “The Lord has truly been raised and has appeared to Simon!”. ³⁵Then the two recounted what had taken place on the way and how he was made known to them in the breaking of the bread. ³⁶While they were still speaking about this he stood in their midst and said to them, “Peace be with you”.*

As they approached Emmaus, the disciples had invited Jesus to stay because it was late and night had fallen (v. 29). The dangers of the night stalked travellers. However, after recognizing Jesus in the breaking of bread, “*at that very moment they set out and returned to Jerusalem*” (v.33). On discovering Jesus in their midst, the fear of the night is transformed into missionary audacity; sadness becomes joy in the certainty of the Risen One.

Thus, they begin the journey back to the community, which they find gathered around the apostles. The community joyfully proclaims the witness to the Risen One. “*It is true! The Lord has risen and appeared to Simon!*” (v.34). For their part, they relate their encounter on the road and how they recognized him as he broke the bread.

As they discuss the appearances of the Risen One to their total amazement Jesus himself appears in their midst and bestows on them the gift of peace: “*Peace be with you*” (v.36). It is not only a greeting, or the manifestation of a desire, but Jesus is giving verbal expression to what He does: The one who is peace (cf. *Eph 2:14*), gives peace to his disciples as a prize of his victory over death. In the gathered community, Jesus also makes himself present through the gift of his peace.

Luke wants to show us in a special way, in this narrative, those “places” where to find the Risen One.

Jesus had gone out to meet his disciples *on the road* (a symbol of life), even though their eyes did not recognize him (vv.13-24); while he journeyed with them he explained *the Scriptures*, in the light of his own paschal mystery and there their hearts had burned within them (v.25-27), in the house he shared with them the “*breaking of bread*” (Eucharist) (vv.28-31) and finally he becomes present *in the community* (v. 36).

But we are not the only ones who are taught where to find the Risen One. This encounter, as was the case with the Emmaus disciples when their eyes were opened as Jesus broke the bread, sets us in motion. In other words, it is a movement that takes place in community: they went forth together to proclaim the encounter with the risen Lord.

CHAPTER 1


THE WORD OF GOD, PATH AND FOUNDATION OF BIPM



*Jesus himself drew near
and walked with them.*

Lk 24:15

OUR LIFE, A JOURNEY

he Wisdom of Israel presents the life of the human beings as a journey with different alternatives, where each person is free to decide which option to follow, and to accept the consequences of what that means. In these decisions, ultimately, life or death is chosen. Therefore, the signposts forewarn pilgrims and invite them to opt for God's plan. The New Testament, and especially the work of Luke, locates the life and teaching of Jesus on a journey that begins in Galilee (*cf. Lk 9:51*) and leads to Jerusalem (*cf. Lk 19:29-47*).

God, in creating everything and preserving it through Christ, his Word, revealed himself from the beginning to all humankind through creation things (*cf. Gen 1:1-27*). After the fall of our first ancestors (*cf. Gen. 3:8-13*), he personally revealed himself to them in his merciful love, nourishing in them the hope of salvation through the promise of redemption (*cf. Gen. 3:15-21*). Thus, at the appointed time, he called Abraham to make him the father of a great people, whom he later instructed through the Patriarchs, Moses, and the Prophets for them to recognize him as the only true and living God. He also revealed himself to be a caring Father and just judge, offering eternal life to all who sought him with a sincere heart (*cf. Ps 34, Ps 40*) and to those who are awaiting the promised Saviour (*cf. Ps 130*). In this way, he prepared the way for the Gospel among his people⁷.

The fullness of the Christian life of missionary disciples is to be attained in the personal and community encounter with Christ, which is revealed to us through the gift of His Word, through the Tradition of the Church and in Sacred Scripture. Both “are like a mirror in which the pilgrim Church on earth looks at God, from whom she has received everything”⁸.

7 Cf. DV 3.

8 Cf. VD 7.

Jesus seeks to draw near today and walk along with us, as he did with the Emmaus disciples, to accompany us in the different circumstances of life. The Church invites us to accompany him through the prayerful and frequent reading of Sacred Scripture, since in it we discover the Word of God, a lamp for our feet and a light for our path (*cf. Ps 119:105*). Nevertheless, in daily life, we encounter multiple obstacles to reading the Bible. Lack of time, worries, difficulties in understanding biblical texts, and even the fact of not having a Bible, are some difficulties that prevent us from having contact with the written Word of God.

The Church has always venerated Sacred Scripture in the same way as it venerates the Body of Christ, tirelessly seeking to share with the faithful the Bread of Life in the Word and in the Eucharist⁹. Nevertheless, it is necessary to recognize that the Eucharist is founded on the Word. (...) Hence, it is necessary to make every possible pastoral effort so that all the faithful may have access to the Word of God and that it becomes the firm rock on which our lives are founded (*cf. Mt 7:24-27*). Thus, there is an urgent need to transform our pastoral structures so that the Word is no longer the object of study of a specific pastoral ministry, the biblical pastoral ministry, and becomes the source that nourishes all the pastoral care of the Church, and is the heart that breathes new life to all its members¹⁰.

The concrete response to this urgent need is Biblical Inspiration of the entire Pastoral Ministry (BIPM), a new paradigm, a way of organizing pastoral care that seeks to highlight the central place of the Word of God in the life of the church¹¹, through which God offers himself to all humanity in a dialogue of communion for the salvation of all who open themselves to that gift¹².

Whoever claims to be a disciple of the Lord must remember that Jesus himself says: “*My words are spirit and life*” (*Jn 6:63*). To encounter this full life and to proclaim it to our sisters and brothers, we need to develop an attentive and prayerful attitude to the Word, for it is the light that illuminates our life, that

9 Cf. VD 21

10 Cf. VD 45

11 Cf. VD 73

12 Cf. VD 45

nurtures and strengthens our faith and renews us in hope. It moves us to follow Christ and to make a meaningful commitment to the mission of his Church and to the transformation of the world through witness and the exercise of fraternal charity. To remain in Christ and in his love is to abide in his Word, to embrace it, to proclaim it and to put it into practice (*cf. Jn 8:31, Jn 15:9-10*).

THE WORD OF GOD LIGHTS UP OUR PATH

From the beginning, Sacred Scripture confronts us with the mystery that distinguishes the God of Israel from other gods (*cf. Ps 115*). The God of Israel, through a free and gratuitous initiative of his love, is the one who communicates with his people and lets himself be known. Through his Word, God reveals himself to Israel, and thus to all humanity (*cf. Is. 42:6-9*), inviting us to establish a fruitful dialogue, founded on love and friendship (*cf. Ex 33:11; Is 41:8*), through which God seeks to communicate to us his own life (*cf. Jn 10:10*)¹³.

God spoke in various ways throughout history, revealing his Word to the prophets. But in these last days, he has spoken to us through his Son, Jesus Christ (*cf. Heb 1:1*). The Word existed from the beginning, and the Word was with the Father (*cf. Jn 1:1*). Jesus is the definitive Word of God who made his dwelling among us (*cf. Jn 1:14*) and who, through the Holy Spirit, continues to speak in the life of our people today to make himself known to all mankind¹⁴.

OUR JOURNEY IN THE LIGHT OF THE WORD IS A HISTORY OF SALVATION

a) The beginning of the journey: Its origins

In the beginning, the earth was chaos and confusion and, in the darkness, God burst in by uttering His Word; then the whole universe began to take shape (*cf. Gen 1:1-2, 4^a*). God spoke, and there was light; God spoke, and living

13 Cf. VD 2

14 Cf. VD 7

beings began to exist, from the simplest to the ones who were created in his image and likeness, his masterpiece, man and woman. Thus, the first account of creation in Genesis teaches us that every time God “speaks”, it is to create something good, and what he creates is a blessing for all humankind: “*And God blessed them and said to them...and God looked at everything he had made, and found it very good*” (cf. *Gen 1:28,31*).

Through the Word all things were created (cf. *Jn 1:3*)”, *By the Lord’s Word the heavens were made; by the breath of his mouth all their host... For he spoke, and it came to be, commanded, and it stood in place*”. (*Ps 33:6,9*) The Word is the creative force of God, which remains forever (cf. *Is 40:8; Mt 24:35; 1 Pe 1:25*) sustaining and preserving the life of Creation and of all the men and women who dwell in it. The whole of Creation witnesses to the presence of the Word of the Lord; because of this, in contemplating its wonders, we bless the Lord with joy (cf. *Ps 104*), since in it we recognize the voice of God who speaks every day, inviting us to live in communion with him, with others, with ourselves and with all creatures.

b) Following in the footsteps of the people of God

In carefully planning and preparing the salvation of the whole human race, God formed a people for himself, to whom he would entrust his promises. The key element of Israel’s identity is the Covenant, which was first celebrated with Abraham and later with all the people through Moses on Mount Sinai (*Ex 19:1-25*). To his people, God revealed himself by words and deeds as the one true and living God. Likewise, through the prophets, he himself spoke his Word so that they might gain an understanding of the ways of salvation¹⁵.

The Old Testament accounts are the fruit of Israel’s experience of faith, a human experience, profoundly shaped by the presence of the Word of God. Through it, God enters into their history to transform it into a history of salvation. Along the way, Israel gradually realizes that if God has addressed his Word to them, it is because he wants to make them his own people, a

15 Cf. DV No. 14

kingdom of priests, a holy nation, which is constituted as such by hearing the Word of God (*cf. Ex 19:5-6*).

The concrete history of Israel begins with the dialogue between God and Abraham. God directs his Word to Abraham to make himself known and to invite him to live a new life in his company (*cf. Gen 12:1ss; Gen 17:5*) “*Go forth from your land, your relatives, and from your father’s house to a land that I will show you*” (*Gen 12:1*). The decision is not easy for Abraham; it involves a radical change of plans. However, the same Word inspires him with confidence and assurance and, trusting in it, he freely accepts the invitation. Along the way, the Word will become a continuous presence that guides Abraham and his descendants, keeping their hope alive: “*I am with you and will protect you wherever you go.... I will never leave you until I have done what I promised you*” (*Gen 28:15; cf. Gen 15:1*).

As the narrative unfolds, Israel, established in Egypt, becomes a large nation and forgets God, but God never forgets them. Thus, seeing them oppressed in the suffering of slavery, he hears their cry and comes down to rescue them (*cf. Ex 3:7-8*). Through Moses, God delivers his Word to the people. His clear intention is to free them from slavery to be able to enter a Covenant with them (*cf. Ex 3:16-20; Ex 20:1-17*).

The mission which God entrusts to Moses, the great prophet who spoke to God face to face (*cf. Dt 34:10*), is for a renewed trust in the Word that God reveals to him and which He will put into his mouth (*cf. Ex 4:10-12*). Once the people are freed, the Covenant is celebrated in the heart of the desert, where the people undertake to fulfil “*all the Words of Yahweh*” (*Ex 24:3*), which Moses will write down so that they remain forever imprinted in the memory of Israel (*cf. Ex 24:1-4*). God manifests himself as the faithful God, rich in mercy, who fulfils his Covenant eternally. The people, in turn, commit themselves to be faithful, hearing, living the Word of God and teaching it to their children (*cf. Dt 6:4-9*).

If anything is stamped on the consciousness of Israel, it is that whoever hears and puts into practice the Word of the Lord, living their lives in accordance with it, they will find life, be fruitful and the Lord will bless them (*cf. Dt 30:15-20*):

Hear, O Israel!... Take to heart these words which I command you today. Keep repeating them to your children. Recite them when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you get up. Bind them on your arm as a sign and let them be as a pendant on your forehead. Write them on the doorposts of your houses and on your gates.

(Dt 6:4-9)

After a long sojourn through the desert, Israel conquers the promised land and establishes herself in it. It will be there that the prophets arise, men chosen and sent by God to proclaim his Word to the people. Their mission is not easy, it is to announce God's mercy manifested in his fidelity to the Covenant, and to denounce the infidelities and injustices committed by the people, calling them back to conversion (*cf. Jer 1:4-10*). For this reason, the prophets are persecuted and many are put to death (*cf. 1 Kings 19:9-18; Mt 23:37*). However, they experience the faithfulness of God in the mission, since God himself puts his words in the mouths of the prophets so that someday they may echo in the mouths of the people (*cf. Is 51:16; 59:21*). The Word of God in the mouth of the prophets is much more than a message addressed to the people; it is a dynamic reality, a transforming force that accomplishes what God proclaims (*Is 55:10ff*) so that Israel may find salvation and become a light for all nations (*cf. Is 49:6*).

c) Jesus, the Word of God made flesh, is our way

God spoke to Israel in many ways (*cf. Heb 1:1-2*), yet the people would not listen, hardening their hearts (*cf. Mt 13:15*). Then, because of his loving mercy, he decided to send his Son, the Word who was with him from the beginning (*cf. Jn 1:1; 3:16*). Jesus is the living Word of God who became human to walk beside us, who came to save the world from sin and death, so that we may all become God's children (*cf. Eph 1:3-6*) and members of his new people, the Church.

We learn how to live as children of God by contemplating Jesus in the Gospels. Jesus is the Son who lives in intimate communion with his Father (*cf. Jn 10:30*), who frequently retires to solitary places to pray (*cf. Lk 5:16; 6,12*). He is the beloved Son of the Father, from whom he receives the Holy Spirit who guides him to live in fidelity to his mission (*cf. Mk 1: 9-11*). By his gestures and teachings, he proclaims the arrival of the Kingdom (*cf. Mt. 8:16*) and shows the way to the Father (*cf. Jn 14:6-9*). He does not speak on his own, but he speaks the Words of the Father (*cf. Jn 13:49-50*), and he knows that the Father loves him because he is willing to give his life for the salvation of all humanity (*cf. Jn 10:18*). To become children of God, we must first become disciples of Jesus.

“God has seen to it that what He had revealed for the salvation of all nations would abide perpetually in its full integrity and be handed on to all generations”¹⁶ Therefore, in his sojourn on earth, Jesus chose the Twelve to be with Him and to send them out to preach (*cf. Mk 3:13-15*). Jesus walked with them, making known to them the mysteries of the Kingdom, healing the sick, casting out devils, eating with sinners, and forgiving their sins (*cf. Mk 1:32-34; Mk 6:53-56; Mt 9:5-7; Mk 2:16*). Before he left this world, he breathed his Spirit on the apostles (*cf. Jn 20:22*) and, making them partakers in his mission (*cf. Jn 20:21*), He sent them forth to proclaim his Word to all the nations of the earth (*cf. Mk 16:15*).

The apostles faithfully fulfilled their entrusted mission, proclaiming the Gospel with unfaltering determination. “*Woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel*” (*1 Cor 9:16*), says St. Paul, who, from his encounter with Jesus on the road to Damascus, gave his whole life to the service of the Gospel (*cf. Acts 9:19*), enduring difficulties and even being imprisoned for his preaching (*cf. Col 1:24-29*). We, disciples of the Lord, are called today to continue this mission, proclaiming his Word to all mankind.

In Jesus, the way, the truth and the life (*cf. Jn 14:6*), God wants to journey along with the whole human family, whose history is marked by joys, happiness and hopes, but also by sadness, suffering, injustice, violence and we lack of hope. Jesus is the beloved Son of God, to whom we must listen to (*cf. Mt 17:5*) to find new life amid difficulties. He is the fullness of revelation, whoever sees

him, sees the Father (cf. *Jn 14:9*) and rejoices in his love. In word and deed, Jesus shows us the merciful heart of the Father and invites us to follow him, embrace his way of life so that our life may be a living witness of the Father's love (cf. *Jn 14:10-12*).

d) The paschal journey of missionary disciples of Jesus

Faith, the gift of God, is our response to the Word that God proclaims. Faith begins by listening, says St. Paul (cf. *Rom 10:17*). This refers to listening to the Word of God that leads to the encounter with Jesus and in Him to communion with the Father in the Holy Spirit. Those who listen to the Word of the Lord become part of a new family, the family of God: *"My mother and my brothers are those who hear the word of God and act on it"* (*Lk 8:21*). Sacred Scripture placed in our hands is the privileged entry point for us to hear the Word of the Lord and enter fruitful, personal and community dialogue with Jesus Christ, Lord and giver of life. Hence, it becomes necessary *"To present to the faithful the Word of God contained in Sacred Scripture as a gift of the Father for the encounter with the living Jesus Christ, a path of true conversion and renewed communion and solidarity"*¹⁷.

We, missionary disciples of the Lord are invited to live in communion with our brothers and sisters, in the image of the Trinity, to bear witness to the merciful love of the Father (cf. *Jn 17:20-21*). But what is the requirement for becoming a disciple of the Lord and entering into this communion? Jesus says it clearly: *"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord!'"* (*Mt 7:21*), but those who listen to my words and act on them (cf. *Mt 7:24*), because *"If you remain in my word, you will truly be my disciples"* (*Jn 8:31*). It is necessary, then, for all people to live in Him, to present the Word of God contained in Scripture as a source of Christian spirituality and of all evangelization. This implies an understanding of the pastoral action of the Church, as a pastoral activity animated by the Word of God, which implies implementing the paradigm of Biblical Inspiration of the entire Pastoral Ministry in all ecclesial service.

17 AD 248

MARY LEADS US IN THE JOURNEY OF FAITH

Mary is the first missionary disciple of the Lord, who listens attentively to the Word that the angel announces to her, believes it, welcomes it and, in making it her own, responds: “*May it be done to me according to your word*” (Lk 1:38). In her obedience to the Word of God, Mary is a model of the missionary disciple who remains faithful to the Word, meditates on it and keeps it in her heart (cf. Lk 2:19,51). The meditated Word enables her to understand the mysteries of her son, to accompany him on the way of the cross and to stand beside it. The Word that she keeps in the heart is the one that offers him comfort and hope in the midst of pain and suffering. The Word of God kept in her heart allows her to generously accept and live out the last words of Jesus: “*Woman, behold, your son!*” (Jn:19:26). In the person of John, Mary receives us as her children to teach us to listen to the Word of Jesus. With Mary let us begin a new journey in the Church by listening, praying and proclaiming the Word of the Lord in all our daily activities.



Readings suggested for further Study

Chapter 1

- ✧ *VATICAN COUNCIL II: Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, Dei Verbum (1965), Nos. 1-10. Available at www.vatican.va*
- ✧ *Message to the People of God of the XII Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops (2008), Chapter 1. Available at www.vatican.va*
- ✧ *BENEDICT XVI, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, Verbum Domini (2008), Nos. 1-21. Available at www.Vatican.va*
- ✧ *SILVA S., La Palabra de Dios en la Iglesia y en su actividad eclesial, Consejo Episcopal Latinoamericano, Colección Autores No 41 (2013), pp. 15-135.*

LECTIO GUIDE

**“JOURNEYING TOGETHER IN OUR
COMMUNITY IN THE LIGHT OF THE
WORD OF GOD”**



“For the Lord’s word is upright”

Ps 33:4

STEP 1 – Reading: Psalm 33

- ✱ What does the Psalm say about the Word of God?

STEP 2 - Meditation

- ✱ How have I/we experience the presence of the Word of God on the way in our lives?
- ✱ What is the place of the Word of God in my personal life and in the life of our community?
- ✱ In what concrete circumstances have I/we recognized the Word of God as light in my/our path?
- ✱ What does the life of Jesus tell us about how we are called to receive the Word?

STEP 3 - Prayer

- ✱ We praise and bless the Lord for the presence of his Word among us ...
- ✱ We ask for forgiveness because, along the way, we have often not listened to it ...
- ✱ We ask the Lord to give us hunger and thirst for His Word...

STEP 4 - Contemplation/Action

- ✱ We enjoy and delight in the gift of the Word present in our path.
- ✱ We prepare ourselves to listen to it with a willing heart.
- ✱ We identify a few strategies at the pastoral level to awaken hunger and thirst for the Word (cf. Am 8:11) in our community.

CHAPTER 2


THE PILGRIM PEOPLE, MEDIATOR OF BIPM



“What are you discussing as you walk along?”

Lk 24:17

PILGRIMS IN THE EXAMPLE OF JESUS

raditionally going on pilgrimage has been associated with the visit to holy places. It is an ancient custom, a practice in virtually all religions and consists of making a journey to a place consecrated to a divinity, a temple, a shrine or other such place. It is a custom very rooted in the culture of the native peoples of Latin America and the Caribbean.

In Ancient, this tradition also existed. Every year the Israelites went on pilgrimage to the Temple of Jerusalem to celebrate various feasts dedicated to the Lord (*cf. Ps 122*). On the way back, the pilgrims descended from the city singing and praising the Lord, full of joy and renewed hope. In contrast, the Emmaus disciples, who were in Jerusalem to celebrate Passover, were returning distressed, they were sad and without hope. Jesus, in whom they had put all their expectations of liberation, had died. The pain and sadness of the cross had overshadowed their faith, preventing them from remembering the words Jesus had spoken to them, when he foretold his passion and death:

*“Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem,
and the Son of Man will be handed over to
the chief priests and the scribes, and they
will condemn him to death and hand him
over to the Gentiles who will mock him, spit
upon him, scourge him, and put him to
death, but after three days he will rise”.*

(Mk 10:33-34)

These disciples remind us of our own condition as pilgrims. Christian life is a permanent pilgrimage towards the Father's house (*cf. Jn 14:2*). We are passing through this world: "*But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we also await a saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ*" (*Phil. 3:20*). However, our pilgrimage takes place in concrete places and circumstances, a land that often abounds in "*milk and honey*" (*Ex 3:14*), gifting us the beauty of Creation and its goodness with abundant fruits of life, joy, hope and love. But on many other occasions, even though we work hard and give our best, we find only "*thorns and thistles*" (*Gen 3:18*), suffering, meaninglessness, frustration, violence and misunderstanding.

We embark on this pilgrimage in the company of our family, friends, and of all humanity, but above all, in the company of Jesus. It is He who wants to make our personal history a history of salvation. He draws near each day to walk with us, and asks: "*What are you discussing as you walk along?*" (*Luke 24:17*). The question invites us to dialogue to understand in Him our reality and the true meaning of our existence.

*"Being Christian is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but the encounter with an event, a person, which gives life a new horizon and a definitive direction"*¹⁸. We have been created in and by the Word and we are called to live in it to know God and to understand ourselves and others¹⁹; that is, to find true meaning of our existence. The Word of God, proclaimed amid our everyday realities, requires our free acceptance, through faith in Jesus Christ, so that our lives may become a pilgrimage lived in the same faith, full of hope, happiness and joy, commitment and witness. Faith, thus understood, takes "*shape as an encounter with a person to whom we entrust our whole life*"²⁰ and who always lives with us, Jesus our Lord.

Jesus is the one who has the Words of eternal life (*cf. Jn 6:63-69*); in hearing his Word, amid everyday joys and sorrows, we find a response to the questions of our life and discover the sure way to live the Kingdom and dwell in the

18 DCE 1; VD 11.

19 Cf. VD 22.

20 VD25.

Father's house (cf. *Ps 27:4; Lk 15:11-31*): "*Whoever hears my word and believes in the one who sent me has eternal life*" (*Jn 5:24*). The purpose of Biblical Inspiration of the entire Pastoral Ministry is to teach the people of God to live every day in the attentive and prayerful listening of the Word so that all existence can be ordered towards Christ, the Way, the Truth and the Life. It is a listening which leads to embracing Jesus who speaks, accepting what He says and obeying his Word. In other words, it is a matter of laying the details of each day, with its sorrows and joys, before Jesus, listening to Him with a docile and willing heart, and responding generously to him, directing our decisions and actions towards him.

ISRAEL, THE PILGRIM PEOPLE

The formation of Israel as God's people takes long years of pilgrimage. Abraham, the Father of Israel, is invited by God to begin the journey: "*Go forth from your land, your relatives, and from your father's house to a land that I will show you*" (*Gen 12:1*). From that moment on, his life becomes a permanent pilgrimage in search of the land that God had promised him (cf. *Gen 17:8; Heb 11:9*). The compass that guides his sojourn and enables him to face different circumstances is the Word by which the Lord guides him.

The figure of Abraham foreshadows what will later become the people of Israel, a pilgrim people on their way to the promised land. The pilgrimage through the desert takes place in the presence of God (cf. *Dt 1:30-33*), who leads her by means of his Word, which is expressed in concrete actions. By day, God is the cloud that protects them from the sun and at night, a pillar of fire that lights up the way (cf. *Ex 13:21*).

However, the people experience the weariness of the pilgrimage, suffer hunger and thirst, and murmur against God, remembering the fleshpots of Egypt, where, despite being slaves, they ate their fill (cf. *Ex 16:3*). But God, always faithful to his promises (cf. *Dt 4:35ff; 7:9-10*), feeds her with manna and quail (cf. *Ex 16:9-15*), quenches their thirst (cf. *Ex 17:5-6*) and leads them to safe places to camp.

The pilgrimage of Israel does not end with the conquest of the promised land. There begins a new stage, which consists, rather, of a spiritual pilgrimage. It is about practicing fidelity to the Covenant. Nevertheless, the people fall again and again into infidelity because they do not listen to the Word of God (*cf. Is 6:9-10; Mt 13:15*). Then emerges the figure of the prophets, who call the people to conversion; they need to remember the Law, to listen to the Word announced and to put it into practice (*cf. Ps 19:8-15*). In this sense, to be on pilgrimage in the light of the Word is to live in fidelity to the Covenant, practicing justice and finding peace in the presence of the Lord. Not to listen to it is to live in darkness, practicing injustice, falling into anguish, fear and despair.

Despite God's faithfulness and mercy, the people hardened their hearts and ceased to listen to the Lord, for which reason they lost the land and became prisoners in exile (*cf. Is 48:17-19*). God, determined to open the way to salvation, proclaims through the prophets that he will give them a new heart capable of hearing his Word (*cf. Ez 36:22-30*), he will rescue them from exile and will lay out a new path for them to recover the land, and allow themselves to be led by his Word.

JESUS, THE WORD, JOURNEYED THROUGH THIS WORLD

In the fullness of time, the pilgrim people, who lived in darkness (...), saw a great light (*cf. Mt 4:16; Isa 9:1*). *"I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life"* (*Jn 8:12*). Jesus Christ is the Word of the Father who became a pilgrim, assuming a poor, meek and humble human face: Jesus of Nazareth (*cf. Jn 1:9,14*). In Him we recognize the merciful love of the Father, who takes on our achievements, joys and joys and well as our failures, pains and sufferings (*cf. Mt 1:23; Mt 11:28-30*).

Jesus is the pilgrim who *"has nowhere to lay his head"* (*Mt 8:20*); however, he becomes our traveling companion and is concerned for the livelihood of every pilgrim because he wants to give them fullness life (*cf. Jn 10:10; 14-17*). Jesus went through this life doing good (*cf. Acts 10:37-39*). He healed the sick,

freed those oppressed by impure spirits, raised the dead (*cf. Mk 5:1-43; Lk 7:11-17; Jn 11:1-43*) and forgave sinners (*cf. Lk 7:36-50*), inviting them to conversion (*cf. Jn 8:11*). In this way, it gave new meaning to the lives of those who followed him. His words and deeds challenge us today and invite us to follow him to give new meaning to our existence. Whoever follows him must renounce themselves, remain faithful to his Word and bear witness to it (*cf. Lk 9:23-26; Jn 8:31*).

Jesus, the Word of God, on pilgrimage among the peoples of Latin America and the Caribbean, accompanies us surrounded by injustice, violence, corruption and economic and social inequality, calling us to transform reality. It is about giving new meaning to our life in concrete fashion. Jesus reveals God to us as the Father of all (*cf. Mt 6:7-14*); He teaches us to pray to our Father (*cf. Mt 6:5-6*); He invites us to work to make the Kingdom of God a reality among us (*cf. Mt 13:1-52*), by building a more just, fraternal and society, where we live in solidarity with each other.

THE CHURCH, PILGRIM AMID A CHANGE OF EPOCH

Every Age brings its own blessings and difficulties; however, we should realize that we are pilgrims experiencing a change of era at every level. It is a time of dizzying changes affecting all aspects of human and social life and impacting culture, politics, economics, education as well as religion. In this new social and cultural context, reality has become increasingly complex; it might seem that we are facing a crisis of faith and that Christian values are being lost. We need to learn to discern the voice of God at the heart of these realities.

This change of era is occurring at a global level, spanning continents, cultures and religions. However, one element that differentiates the Latin American and Caribbean reality from the rest of the world is the fact that our continent has the largest proportion of Catholics, of any part of the World,

more than 48% of the population²¹. This is a hopeful reality that challenges and urges us to renew our vocation as missionary disciples, so that enlightened by Christ and His Word, we are instruments that promote the value of human dignity and authentic Christian liberation²².

Undoubtedly, faith in God has inspired the life and culture of the peoples of Latin America and the Caribbean for more than five centuries. Faith, transmitted through the family, male and female catechists, and so many anonymous people, has been the source of joy, solidarity, of the characteristic fellowship of our peoples, of living hope, kept alive even in circumstances of injustice and adversity²³.

However, the current reality of our continent presents us with many challenges that demand a greater commitment to the service of the Kingdom of God through the proclamation of the Word and Christian witness. This requires promoting a transformation of those situations that challenge us both in the social as well as the ecclesial context.

SOME SITUATIONS WHICH IMPACT US WITHIN THE SOCIAL CONTEXT

a) Inequality

We are painfully conscious of the social and economic inequality and the concentration of political and economic power in the hands of a few, which results in inequity, the social division, destitution, underemployment and unemployment, absence of just labour laws and exclusion. This situation

21 Data Pontifical Yearbook (2015).

Source: press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/es/bollettino/pub-blico/2016/03/05/estadisticas.html.

22 Cf. AD 26.

23 Ibid.

requires a renewed commitment to a prophetic proclamation of the Word, that denounces injustice, violations of human rights, and defends the dignity of the human person. We must highlight respect for the human person, open new horizons, inviting the recognition of the face of Christ in each person, especially those who are neglected by society and those who are on the existential peripheries²⁴: including children, the poor, the marginalized, the sick, the elderly, prisoners. The Word of God invites us to recognize Jesus as the Son of God, who, born in a manger, assumes a poor and humble condition²⁵ to proclaim the Kingdom to those who are humble, the simple, sinners, the sick and all who need the love of the Father (*cf. Mt 9:10-13; Mt 11:25-27*).

b) Mistrust

We also find that the yearned-for establishment of peace in our societies is undermined by corruption which penetrates political, economic and social life, unleashing a degeneration of ethical values and indifference to the search for the common good. Distrust in public institutions is rife and there is an unrelenting surge of violence. For the missionary disciples of the Lord, truth is objective and has a name: Jesus of Nazareth. Hence it is necessary to renew the proclamation of Jesus Christ to make him known and to discern with him the signs of the times, in the light of the Word of God, which invites us to place ourselves at the service of the Kingdom²⁶. “If we do not know God in and with Christ, all of reality is transformed into an indecipherable enigma; there is no way, and without a way, there is neither life nor truth”²⁷.

c) Individualism

On the other hand, the growing cultural diversity that undoubtedly enriches life in society also affects social harmony, the integration among peoples and

24 Cf. EG 46-49

25 Cf. AD 52

26 Cf. AD 33.

27 Benedict XVI, Inaugural Address V General Conference of the Bishops of Latin American and Caribbean, Aparecida (2007).

the conserving of Christian identity. Everyday life is threatened by a growing individualism, which weakens community ties and encapsulates life in selfish personal interests, where there is no longer space for others, and where the voice of God is no longer heard and the desire to do good fade²⁸. The attainment of the common good is set aside to make way for the immediate satisfaction of the desires of individuals²⁹. In response to individualism, we might remember that Christ has called us to become servants of his Kingdom (*cf. Mt 20:25-28*) and to collaborate in the creation of a more fraternal, just and united world, which is concerned about putting the common good before personal interests (*cf. Rom 14:17-18*). Likewise, it is important to keep in mind that in Christ we are called to persevere in faith, maintaining our Christian identity in the light of the Word (*cf. 2 Tim 3:14-17*).

d) Consumerism

Another salient factor of this era is the development of technology and of communication networks³⁰, which promote the search for happiness through access to material goods, thereby generating a frenzied and alienating consumerism³¹. However, this development does not answer the great questions of human life³²: Who are we? What is our mission in this life? What is truth? etc. The ultimate answers to the yearnings present in the heart of every person are to be found in dialogue with God³³, through which we can understand ourselves. *“The word of God in fact is not inimical to us; it does not stifle our authentic desires, but rather illuminates them, purifies them and brings them to fulfilment”*³⁴.

28 Cf. EG 2

29 Cf. AD 44.

30 Cf. AD 34

31 Cf. EG 60.

32 Cf. AD 123

33 Cf. VD 23

34 VD 23.

SITUATIONS THAT IMPACT US IN THE ECCLESIAL CONTEXT

a) Discerning the signs of the times

The pilgrim Church in this world, sustained and guided by the Spirit that leads to the fullness of truth (*cf. Jn 16:13*), needs constantly to deepen its knowledge and understanding of the road it travels; for this reason it questions itself along with the disciples: Are we on the right path? What do we see and discern along the way? What are the questions and realities that challenge our pilgrim's progress?

b) Centrality of the Word

To answer these questions, we need to conduct prayerful reading of our reality in the light of the Word, to understand and judge that reality, recognizing the action of God in it. This exercise requires a true pastoral effort to contextualize the Word of God, as witnessed to in Sacred Scripture, at the centre of the life of the Church and of her pastoral care and in the heart of every Christian³⁵. We must not forget that the Church does not live from herself, but from the Word of God.

Indeed, the Church is built upon the Word of God; she is born from and lives by that Word. Throughout its history, the People of God have always found strength in the Word of God, and today the ecclesial community itself grows by hearing, celebrating and studying that Word³⁶.

35 Cf. VD 73

36 VD 3

c) New life in Christ

The nature and function of Sacred Scripture, as the Word of God that responds to our everyday situations and guides our life-choices as disciples of the Lord in an era of change, invites us to discover the need to implement Biblical Inspiration of the entire Pastoral Ministry, to present Sacred Scripture as a means of meeting Jesus Christ, to enlighten our pilgrimage by responding to our deepest concerns. It is a matter of nourishing and strengthening the spiritual life of missionary disciples through the frequent and prayerful reading of Sacred Scripture, so that the Word of God becomes our source of life, a kind of compass that guides our decisions and indicates the way to follow³⁷.

MARY TEACHES US HOW TO BE PILGRIMS

Blessed are you who believed that what was spoken to you by the Lord would be fulfilled” (Lk 1:45). This phrase is “like a key that opens to us the intimate reality of Mary”³⁸; She is the Mother of the Lord who teaches us to undertake the pilgrimage in faith. As a daughter of Zion, she follows in the footsteps of Abraham, who, by faith, obeyed and “*was called to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance; he went out, not knowing where he was to go*” (*Heb 11:8*). This symbol of pilgrimage in faith, understood as a response to the revealed Word, reveals the inner experience of Mary. Thus, she becomes the believer par excellence, the Blessed Virgin who leads in the pilgrimage of faith sustained by the Word that had been announced to her, and, because of it and her total trust in the promises of God, she remained faithfully united with her Son, right to the Cross³⁹. There it was that she took John as her son, and in him, each one of us, to teach us how to be pilgrims in this life, listening to the Word of the Lord and being faithful to it.

37 37 Cf. Benedict XVI: Message to the youth of the world on the occasion of the XXI World Youth Day (9 April 2006)

38 RM 19

39 Cf. LG 58



Readings suggested for further Study

Chapter 2

- ✧ *II SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, Dei Verbum (1965), Nos. 21-26. Available at www.vatican.va*
- ✧ *V GENERAL CONFERENCE OF BISHOPS OF LATIN AMERICAN AND THE CARIBBEAN, Concluding document, Nos. 20-128.*
- ✧ *BENEDICT XVI, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation Verbum Domini (2008), Nos. 22-28, 50-51. Available at www.vatican.va*
- ✧ *FRANCIS, Apostolic Exhortation Evangelii Gaudium (2013), Nos. 20-109 Available at www.vatican.va*
- ✧ *SILVA S., La Palabra de Dios en la Iglesia y en su actividad eclesial, Consejo Episcopal Latinoamericano, Colección Autores No 41 (2013), pp. 158-164.*

LECTIO GUIDE

**“WE ARE A COMMUNITY ON PILGRIMAGE
IN AN ERA OF CHANGE”**



*“And take the sword of the Spirit,
which is the word of God.”*

Eph 6:17

STEP 1 – Reading: Eph 6:10-20

- ✱ What does the reading say about the Word of God?

STEP 2 -Meditation

- ✱ What are the circumstances in which I/we journey as pilgrims through this life in our community?
- ✱ Which of these circumstances bring me/us closer to the Word of God? What drives me/us away from it?
- ✱ How can I/we strengthen my/our faith to face the circumstances that keep me/us away from the Word?

STEP 3 - Prayer

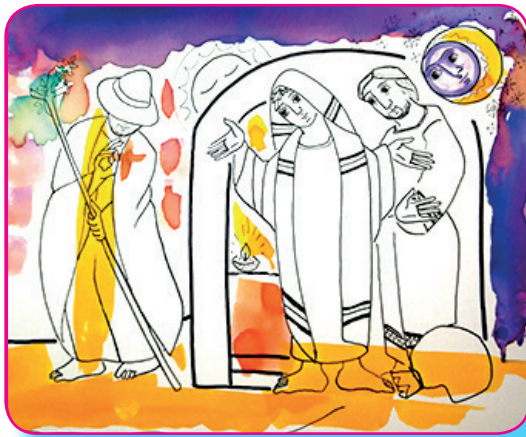
- ✱ We pray and bless the Lord for His Word, which is living and effective and enlightens our pilgrimage ...
- ✱ We ask forgiveness for so many times that we have wandered in the darkness, rejecting the Word of God ... □ We ask the Lord to teach us to live grounded in His Word ...

STEP 4-Contemplation/Action

- ✱ We let ourselves be enveloped by the love that God shares through His Word, present throughout our history.
- ✱ We prepare ourselves to continue to listen to it with a willing heart.
- ✱ We identify some pastoral strategies that promote a frequent and prayerful reading of Sacred Scripture in our community.

CHAPTER 3


WE BECOME FAMILIAR
WITH THE SCRIPTURES SO AS
TO KNOW CHRIST



*Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets,
he interpreted to them what referred to
him in all the scriptures.*

(Lk 24:27)

SACRED SCRIPTURES, THE WRITTEN WORD OF GOD

 Paul tells us that all Scripture is useful for teaching, persuading, correcting and forming in faith (*cf. 2 Tim 3:16*). However, Scripture makes its greatest impact when through it we come to know Christ. St. Jerome, a great lover of the Word of God, asked himself: *“How could one live without the knowledge of Scripture, by which we come to know Christ himself, who is the life of believers?”*⁴⁰ It is necessary, then, to know Christ, to know Sacred Scripture. Where do we start?

God willed to reveal his Mystery of love to human beings by way of dialogue. In Sacred Scripture, he reveals himself as a Word that challenges life and initiates a dialogue with a specific purpose: to know the person of Christ (*cf. Jn 17:3*). The invitation is issued, but it requires our active, conscious, free and voluntary response. We should take Sacred Scripture in our hands, open it, read it carefully and unravel the Word of God from the letters and thus find Jesus Christ and come to know Him.

During this era of change, we Christians are called to be converted to Christ to proclaim him with conviction, fidelity and perseverance (*cf. Lk 8:4-15*), and thus transform the world into the image of the Kingdom of the Father. Hence, we need to develop personal and community pastoral programmes with the Word of God as the foundation of our spiritual life⁴¹. It thus becomes necessary to offer the Word of God to the faithful as gift of the Father for the encounter with the living Jesus, who is the path of “authentic conversion and of renewed communion and solidarity”⁴².

40 VD 72.

41 Cf. VD 72.

42 AD 248.

JESUS CHRIST, THE FULFILMENT OF SACRED SCRIPTURES

*“In times past, God spoke in partial and various ways to our ancestors through the prophets; in these last days, he spoke to us through the Son” (Heb 1:1-2). “God’s word is thus spoken throughout the history of salvation, and most fully in the mystery of the incarnation, death and resurrection of the Son of God”⁴³. In Sacred Scripture we discover the presence of the Word from beginning to end. In the Old Testament, we find it in the Creation (cf. *Gen 1:3-21; Ps 19:2-7*), the Law (cf. *Dt 6:4-9*) and the Prophets (cf. *Jer 1:4-10*). But it reaches its fullness in the New Testament with the coming of Jesus Christ. The Word that was with God, was God, became flesh and dwelt among us (*John 1:14*), assuming a human face, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus Christ, the Son of God made human for the salvation of all humankind, is the one and only complete Word of God. He is the Word that remains forever (*1 Pet 1:25*) revealing the Mystery of God in a double sense: Jesus Christ is the “human face of God and the divine face of humanity”⁴⁴ who, in his words and deeds, teaches us who God is, what it is to be human, and what is the complete and sure way to enter communion with God and with all humanity.*

The unique and singular history of Jesus is the definitive Word that God speaks to humanity⁴⁵. Thus, Jesus is the only one who can help us discover fully the path of salvation. The permanent encounter with Christ, mediated by the Word of God, witnessed to in the Scriptures stamps his image on the heart of each believer, to the point of our sharing his attitudes (cf. *Phil 2:5*), his missionary zeal (cf. *Mt 9:35*) and his desire to establish the Kingdom of the Father in this world (cf. *Mk 1:14-15*).

43 VD 7.

44 EA 67.

45 Cf. VD 11.

Contemplating Jesus in the Gospel, we discover the key to becoming his disciples and fully living out our status as sons and daughters of God. The life and the mission of Jesus are intimately related to the permanent dialogue he maintained with his Father. Jesus is the Word of God that dwells among us (*cf. John 1:14*), he hears the voice of the Father and obeys it, saying what the Father teaches him (*cf. Jn 8:25-29; Jn 17:8*); in other words, he lives to do His Father's will (*cf. Jn 6:38-40*). Jesus is the one who leads us to the Father (*cf. Jn 14:6*); he is the living bread that came down from heaven (*cf. Jn 6:35*), which is offered to us so that we may find life in abundance (*cf. Jn 10:10*). His words are spirit and are life (*cf. Jn 6:63*) and through them he invites us to remain in communion with God to live in his love (*cf. Jn 15:1-10*). Jesus addresses those who listen to Him, offering them a way of salvation (*cf. Lk 18:18-23*). Through his teachings and his ministry, he invites us to offer our lives to the Father, putting ourselves at the service of his saving work (*cf. Jn 12:25-26*), so that his love may be manifested to all men and women on earth (*cf. 1 Jn 1:1-4*). Whoever follows him must put aside their yearnings, their criteria and their motivations to assume the his yearnings, criteria and motivations of Jesus (*cf. Mk 8:34-38*), always bearing in mind that the true disciple is the one who listens to his Word and puts it into practice (*cf. Lk 8:21; Lk 11:28*).

The New Testament, written in continuity with the Old Testament, shows that in the Paschal Mystery of Christ, his Death and Resurrection, the Plan of Salvation of God is definitively achieved, fulfilling all the promises of the Scriptures (*cf. 1 Cor 15:3*). Hence the whole Bible must be read in the light of this Mystery. On the way to Emmaus, Jesus opened the hearts of the disciples to the understanding of all the Scriptures and, in their burning hearts, they recognized the creative and redemptive power of the Word. He taught them that there is only one key to understanding the Scriptures and finding in them the Word of God, Jesus Christ who died and rose from the dead, in whom the Bible becomes a living and effective Word (*cf. Heb 4,12*).

BIBLICAL INSPIRATION OF THE ENTIRE PASTORAL MINISTRY (BIPM), BECAUSE THE PROCLAMATION OF THE WORD IS THE TASK OF ALL DISCIPLES

The Word of God spoken in history was given and entrusted to the Church for the salvation of all people. That is why the Church venerates Sacred Scripture inspired by the Spirit, always bearing in mind that Christianity is not a religion of a written but silent word, or a religion of the Book, but the religion of the Word of God that is Jesus Christ made man. Starting with the preaching of the Apostles, the Church has not ceased to proclaim the message of salvation to all humanity. This constitutes the living Tradition of the Church. It is in this stream that Scripture is to be proclaimed, heard, read, received and lived as the Word of God⁴⁶.

What is proper to the pastoral activity of the Church is evangelization through the proclamation of the Word of God, a task that has been carried out in various ways throughout its history, in accordance with the understanding which it has had of itself in every age (*see Annex 1*). The Second Vatican Council opened the doors to a new understanding of the Church as the bearer of the proclamation of salvation. Thus, the task of proclaiming the Gospel became the responsibility, not only of bishops and priests, but of the whole People of God in communion with Christ. Based on the Pauline image of the Body of Christ (*cf. 1 Cor 12:12-30*), where all its members bring their gifts and talents to the service of community, it was realized that all the baptized are responsible for the task of evangelism. This self-understanding of the Church underlies the so-called “integrated pastoral care” which is a new way of organizing pastoral work, based on “ecclesial co-responsibility”, and promoting communion and participation, decentralization and subsidiarity, and a church of service.

In the context of integrated pastoral care, Sacred Scripture, since it communicates the living and saving Word of God, cannot be the object of

46 Cf. VD 7

a specific pastoral ministry, but rather applies to all the people of God, lay faithful, consecrated, religious and pastors, since it is the privileged means of establishing a life-changing bond with the person of Jesus Christ⁴⁷. It is based on this recognition that the new paradigm of Biblical Inspiration of the entire Pastoral Ministry has emerged.

IDENTITY, FUNCTION AND MISSION OF BIBLICAL INSPIRATION OF THE ENTIRE PASTORAL MINISTRY (BIPM)

The subject of BIPM is not Sacred Scripture, but the Word of God contained and communicated in it as the source of revelation and salvation. By his Word, God invites men and women of every generation to enter into a dialogue of communion with him so that they may have abundant life. Hence, the basic objective of BIPM is to ensure that the Word of God is the soul of pastoral ministry; the sap that nourishes the salvific vitality, the evangelizing activity of the Church; “at the heart of all ecclesial activity,”⁴⁸ because “*The Church draws life not from herself but from the Gospel, and from the Gospel she discovers ever anew the direction for her journey*”⁴⁹.

BIPM is called to be the driving force of all Pastoral Life of the Church towards the personal encounter with the Living Christ who communicates himself in his Word⁵⁰. Its goal is for the Sacred Scriptures, as Word of God, to become the inspirational source of the believer’s life. Therefore, in the structure of integrated pastoral life, BIPM is transversal to all pastoral ministries⁵¹.

47 Silva S., The Word of God in the Church and in its ecclesial activity, *La Palabra de Dios en la Iglesia y en su actividad eclesial*, Consejo Episcopal Latinoamericano, Colección de autores No 41, 2013 pp. 143-146.

48 VD 1.

49 VD 51

50 Cf. VD 73

51 Silva S., The Word of God in the Church and in its Ecclesial Activity, *La Palabra de Dios en la Iglesia y en su actividad eclesial*, Consejo Episcopal Latinoamericano,

The identity of BIPM derives from what Sacred Scripture is itself: the written Word of God⁵², inspired by the Holy Spirit⁵³ and entrusted to the Church for our salvation⁵⁴. From these elements, the dimensions of BIPM that delineate its functions and mission are deconstructed as illustrated in the following table.

Chart-summary: BIPM AND ITS THREE DIMENSIONS



Colección de autores No 41, 2013, p. 149.

52 Cf. DV 9.

53 Cf. DV 11.

54 Cf. DV 21.

DIMENSION OF INTERPRETATION

The Father reveals himself and “meets His children with great love and speaks with them” (DV21) and does so “through people in human fashion” (DV 12).

*Because
Sacred
Scripture is
written Word
of God ...*



*APB guides
interpretation
and
understanding...*



*Promoting
a prayerful
reading which
strenghtens
Hope.*

In carrying out the will of God the Father, his eternal Word, the *Logos* became man and dwelt among us (*cf. Jn 1:14*). Jesus of Nazareth, the human face of the Word, revealed to us the truth about the Father through his words and actions carried out in the everyday circumstances of life of his time. They remained in the faithful memory of the apostles and the disciples who followed him. In keeping with the command of Jesus Christ, the apostles went out to preach the Good News of salvation to all the nations of the earth (*Mk 16:15*). Faithful to their mission, and with the guidance of the Holy Spirit, they handed on all that Jesus had taught them and gave witness to the works that he had accomplished. Then their successors, to keep this Apostolic Tradition alive, and to announce it from generation to generation, wrote down the Message of Salvation.

God is the ultimate author of the Bible, but

*In composing the sacred books, God
chose people and while employed by Him,
they made use of their powers and abilities,
so that with Him acting in them and through*

them, they, as true authors, consigned to writing everything and only those things which He wanted⁵⁵.

In entering into communication with God through the Bible, we need get to know the literary, historical, religious and political contexts in which the writers wrote. That is, to access the Word, one first seeks to understand the meaning of the human language used by the authors of the biblical texts, bearing in mind that the Old Testament conveys the faith experience of the people of Israel, and the New Testament is the witness of faith of the emerging Church.

It is important to keep in mind that Sacred Scripture is the Word of God as it has the capacity to do make the Saving Mystery of Christ present to men and women of every generation. We never find the Word of God in the simple literalness of the biblical text. Nor is it sufficient to attain a purely intellectual understanding; we need to transcend the mere letter. Therefore, in approaching every biblical text a process of authentic and crucial interpretation needs to take place to achieve an adequate understanding that enables us to pass from the letter to the Spirit⁵⁶; in other words, to move from written word to the Word of God.

It is not enough then to read Sacred Scripture, it is also necessary to unlock the Word of God from its written words to encounter the living Lord Jesus, and through the Spirit who inspires the Word, enter into communion with the Father. It follows that the first function of BIPM is to help understand the true meaning of the Biblical texts, keeping in mind the literary, historical, religious and political contexts in which they were written.

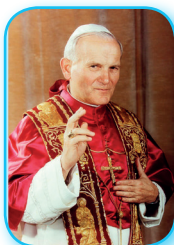
55 DV 11

56 Cf. VD 38.

GOAL
*Teach to interpret
To understand the Word*

Some possible initiatives to attain this goal

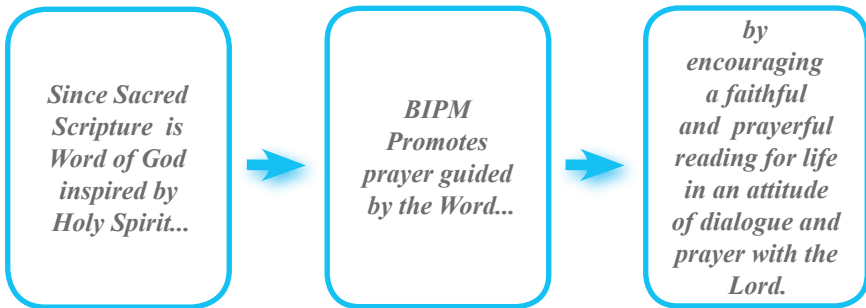
- * Promote the translation of the Bible into languages of native peoples.
- * Teach distinguishing characteristics of the different translations of the Bible.
- * Publish and teach simple methods for interpreting the biblical texts.
- * Conduct presence-based or on-line courses in biblical interpretation.
- * Promote the publication of texts to assist in the preparation of homilies.
- * Organize Bible Schools that include dissemination and implementation of BIPM.



The interpretation of Sacred Scripture is of primary importance for the Christian faith and the life of the Church [...]. The way we interpret the biblical texts for men and women of our time has direct consequences for their personal and communal relationship with God, and is also closely linked to the mission of the Church. (John Paul II, in the presentation of the document “The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church”, of the PONTIFICAL BIBLICAL COMMISSION).

DIMENSION OF COMMUNION

Chosen by God, commissioned and inspired by the Holy Spirit for the saving truth that God wills to reveal to us (cf. DV 6 & 11).



Sacred Scripture is the written Word of God inspired by the Holy Spirit, at the service of the communication of the Mystery of God to men and women of all times. The revelation of God to humanity can only be understood through the guidance of the Holy Spirit⁵⁷. It witnesses to the presence of the Holy Spirit throughout the history of the people of Israel.

The Spirit of God hovered over the waters before the creation of the world (cf. *Gen 1:2*); He is the gift that God grants to those to whom He entrusts with a mission of liberation and of leadership of the people through judges (cf. *Judg 6:34*), kings (cf. *1 Sam 10:10*; *1 Sam 16:13*), and prophets (*Ezek 11:5*). When the fullness of time comes, Jesus is conceived in the womb of Mary through the Holy Spirit (cf. *Mt 1:18*; *Lk 1:35*), and is led by the Spirit throughout his public life. At his Baptism, the Spirit descends upon him in the form of a dove (cf. *Mt 3:26*; *Jn 1:32-33*) and then drives him into the desert to overcome the trials of

57 Cf. VD 15

Satan. In the grace of the Spirit, Jesus heals the sick and drives out demons (cf. *Mt 12:28*). Then, shortly before his death, Jesus proclaims the coming of the Holy Spirit upon all who believe in Him (cf. *Jn 14:15-17, 25-26; Jn 15:26-27; Jn 16:4b-11; Jn 16:12-15*) and, following his resurrection, he breathes the promised Spirit upon his disciples, making them participants in his mission (cf. *Jn 20:22; Acts 2:1-13*).

Through the action of the Holy Spirit, it becomes possible for the Word of God to be expressed in human words through the inspired authors. The Church affirms that the Scriptures faithfully and faithfully teach the truth of God for our salvation⁵⁸. Hence, we can say that “*all scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for persuasion, and for training in righteousness so that one who belongs to God may be competent, equipped for every good work*” (cf. *2 Tim 3:16-17*).

If indeed Scripture is inspired by the Holy Spirit, it is necessary to read it with the help of Spirit himself, to find in it the voice of God that comes out of our encounter. “Without the efficacious working of the Spirit of Truth, the words of the Lord cannot be understood”⁵⁹. Likewise, the Holy Spirit, poured out into our hearts (*Rom 5:5*), animates; that is, it gives life to the Word in us, transforming our existence into the image of Christ, so that we may all be one in Him and find eternal life (cf. *Jn 17:1-3, 10-11, 17, 21-23*).

BIPM has the task of leading missionary disciples to a personal and life-changing encounter with Christ, who comes to meet us, so that we can discover our true Christian vocation: to live in right relationship with God and with each other⁶⁰. It means entering the dynamic relationship with the Word, living our faith daily in dialogue with the Lord; a dialogue that takes place in the heart of the Father (cf. *Jn 14:2-3*) in an atmosphere of loving intimacy, trust and friendship. The Word that is living and effective (cf. *Heb 4:12*), challenging our lives by inviting prayer, conversion and following Christ.

58 Cf. DV 11.

59 VD 16

60 Cf. VD 72

A privileged method for deepening this dialogue is *Lectio Divina* or prayerful reading of Sacred Scripture, the source of all authentically Christian spirituality⁶¹. This prayerful reading, when practiced well, can lead to the encounter with Jesus-Master, to the knowledge of the mystery of Jesus-Messiah, to communion with Jesus-Son of God, and to the witness of Jesus-Lord of the universe⁶². Through its four steps, *Lectio Divina* invites us to make a pilgrimage from our heart to the heart of the Father. It is there that the Word listened to, meditated, prayed and contemplated enlightens personal reality and gives it new meaning, as we stop seeing it with our eyes only and begin to look at it with the merciful eyes of the Father.

Prayer with the Word through *Lectio Divina* immerses us in the life of Christ, which illumines every area of human life, and offers new life. The Word of God in the family, school, culture, work, leisure and all other aspects of social life, makes a new humanity flourish⁶³.

61 Cf. VD 86

62 Cf. AD 249

63 Cf. VD 93

GOAL
**To offer Sacred Scripture to the entire
People of God as mediation for the
encounter with Jesus Christ**

**Some possible initiatives to
achieve this goal:**

- * Establish the celebration of the Month, Week or Day of the Bible in all dioceses, parishes and ecclesial communities.
- * Promote the practice of *Lectio Divina* in all the pastoral areas and in the personal and daily life of all the disciples of the Lord.
- * Institute the practice of *Lectio Divina* in seminaries and houses of formation.
- * Provide programmes for the training of *Lectio Divina* facilitators for young people, children and others.
- * Encourage preparation for the Sunday Eucharist, by holding weekly meetings of *Lectio Divina* with the Gospel of the coming Sunday in parishes and communities.
- * Promote an adequate proclamation of the Word in the liturgy by offering courses for readers of the Word.
- * Propose the Word of God as mediation that promotes processes of ecumenical fraternity.



In intimacy with God and in listening to his Word, little by little we put aside our own way of thinking, which is most often dictated by our lack of openness, by our prejudice and by our ambitions, and we learn instead to ask the Lord: what is your desire? What is your will? What pleases you?

*(Francis,
General Audience 7 May 2014)*

Read and meditate assiduously the Word of the Lord, see that you believe what you read, that you teach what you believe, and that you practise what you teach.

*(Francis, Ordination of Priests,
St. Peter's, 21 April, 2013)*

DIMENSION OF EVANGELIZATION

The goal of Sacred Scripture, as expression of the Word of God, is to promote and direct the life of the Church sent forth to proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom.

Since Sacred Scripture has been Entrusted to the Church for the Salvation of all the humanity ...



BIPM Promotes a prayerful reading...



to proclaim Christ and mould Christian life.

God arranged that what had been revealed in His Son, Jesus Christ for the salvation of all nations would abide perpetually in its full integrity and be handed on to all generations⁶⁴. To this end, Jesus sent out the Apostles with the mission of proclaiming the Kingdom of God and establishing it in all nations⁶⁵ (...).

The Church, accepting the Word of God, understood from its beginnings that its most radical calling was to proclaim the risen Lord, leading to and accompanied by the personal encounter with Him⁶⁶. Thus, the relationship between Christ, the Word of God and the Church cannot be understood as an event in the past, but rather as a vital and ever-present relationship⁶⁷.

64 DV 7

65 VD 17.

66 Cf. VD 91.

67 Cf. VD 51.

God, who spoke in the past, continues to converse with the spouse of his beloved Son. And the Holy Spirit, through whom the living voice of the Gospel rings out in the Church –and through it in the world– leads believers to the full truth and makes the word of Christ dwell in them in all its richness⁶⁸.

The Church is essentially missionary and in carrying out her task of evangelization, she is constantly nourished on the Word of God to enable her to reach an understanding of the saving mission of Christ and to awaken the believer's response. The dynamism that exists between Christ, Word of God and Church gives rise to the third dimension of BIPM, that of evangelization. The Church depends on the Word, and this, for it to reveal the saving face of Christ, depends on the proclamation of the Church. BIPM is called to provide access by all men and all women of every generation, to the God who speaks and communicates his love so that we may have life in abundance (*Jn 10:10*).

No one can give of what they do not have. For this reason, we missionary disciples are called, in the first place, to allow ourselves to be evangelized by the Word so that we can then proclaim and witness to it with authenticity. The Church, on permanent mission, has to promote a profound and experiential knowledge of the Word of God; hence it is the task of BIPM to educate people to read, meditate and pray with the Word⁶⁹. In other words, to teach the disciples of the Lord to base their lives on the firm rock of the Word, so that they not only hear it, but also put it into practice by proclaiming it in their deeds as well as their words (*cf. Mt 7:21-27*).

BIPM requires knowledge of the ordinary lives of all those involved in evangelization, so that the Word of God may enlighten all cultures with their varied ways of understanding their relationship with God, with each other and

68 VD 51.

69 Cf. AD 247.

with the world. At the same time, BIPM has the challenge of helping people leave their selfish interests and take the steps towards a personal encounter with Christ who gives real meaning to existence, inviting us to become servants of the Church and the world. On the other hand, BIPM must demonstrate the capacity of the Word of God to enter into dialogue with the everyday problems which people face, and we need to make every possible effort to “*share the word of God as an openness to our problems, a response to our questions, a broadening of our values and the fulfilment of our aspirations*”⁷⁰.

GOAL
To present the Word of God as a constitutive source of the Christian personality (criteria, values and attitudes).

Some possible initiatives to achieve this goal:

- * Promote the creation of teams to implement BIPM in dioceses, parishes and communities, aiming for the Word of God to become the heart of all ecclesial activity.
- * Develop in missionary disciples of the Lord a relationship of familiarity and closeness with Sacred Scripture, fostering the daily Gospel reading in the liturgical calendar.
- * Promote the formation of ministers of the Word that can celebrate Liturgies of the Word and accompany the biblical formation of communities.
- * Promote the formation of small Christian communities, which nourish their faith through reading, meditation and prayer with Sacred Scripture.
- * Train catechists to include the reading of Sacred Scripture in their classes.
- * Publish material to encourage Bible reading.
- * Base plans, projects and pastoral guidelines on a biblical text.



Thus, we are all called to receive with an open mind and heart the Word of God which the Church imparts every day, because this Word has the capacity to change us from within. Only the Word of God has this capacity to change us from the inside, from our deepest roots. The Word of God has this power. And who gives us the Word of God? Mother Church. She nurses us from childhood with this Word, she raises us throughout our life with this Word, and this is great! It is actually Mother Church who, with the Word of God, changes us from within. The Word of God which Mother Church gives us transforms us, makes our humanity pulse, not according to mundane flesh, but according to the Holy Spirit.

*(Francis, General Audience,
September 3, 2014).*



Readings suggested for further Study

Chapter 3

- ✧ *II VATICAN COUNCIL, Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation Dei Verbum (1965), Nos 11-20. Available at www.vatican.va*
- ✧ *V GENERAL CONFERENCE OF THE BISHOPS OF LATIN AMERICAN E AND THE CARIBBEAN, Concluding document, Nos. 240-249.*
- ✧ *Message to the People of God from the XII Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops (2008), Chapter 2. Available at www.vatican.va*
- ✧ *BENEDICT XVI, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation Verbum Domini (2008), Nos. 29-49, 72-120. Available at www.vatican.va*
- ✧ *FRANCIS, Apostolic Exhortation Evangelii Gaudium (2013), Nos. 111-134. Available at www.vatican.va*
- ✧ *SILVA S., La Palabra de Dios en la Iglesia y en su actividad eclesial, Consejo Episcopal Latinoamericano, Colección Autores No 41 (2013), pp. 140-226.*

LECTIO GUIDE

**“WE ARE A COMMUNITY THAT
UNDERSTANDS, APPLIES AND PROCLAIMS
THE WORD”**



“All Scripture is inspired by God”

2Tim 3:16

STEP 1 – Reading: 2Tim 3:14-17

- ✱ What does the reading say about the Word of God?

STEP 2 - Meditation

- ✱ What place do I/we give to Sacred Scripture in our community and in our personal life?
- ✱ What concrete actions exist in our community that promote a better understanding, practice and proclamation of the Word?
- ✱ How is the Word animating our personal and community life?

STEP 3 - Prayer

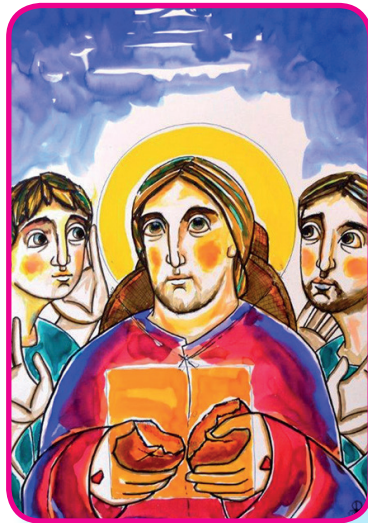
- ✱ We praise and bless the Lord for His Word, the source of discernment for the Christian life
- ✱ We ask forgiveness for our indifference to the Word ...
- ✱ We ask the Lord to give us the gift of understanding, to practise and proclaim his Word with joy and hope ...

STEP 4 - Contemplation/Action

- ✱ We let ourselves be surrounded by the love that God communicates to us through his Word, present throughout our history.
- ✱ We commit ourselves to continue listening to it with a willing heart.
- ✱ We identify some pastoral strategies that help us implement the three dimensions of BIPM in our community.

CHAPTER 4

WE SHARE OUR FAITH IN THE CHURCH, HOUSE OF THE WORD



He came in to stay with them.

Lk 24:29

THE WORD OF GOD AND THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY



According to the New Testament, the Word of God has a home: The Church founded on Peter and the Apostles and their successors the bishops. In the Acts of the Apostles we read that the Christian community, the primitive Church, has its identity in constant and dedicated listening to the Word of God (*Acts 2:42-47*), which the disciples preached faithfully and with courage, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit (*cf. Acts 4:29,31*). The preaching of the Word spread with time, and the number of the disciples of Jesus multiplied (*cf. Acts 6:7*). Gentiles and Jews alike accepted the Word and were converted and became part of the first Christian communities (*cf. Acts 11:1*). The apostolic ministry of the Word was a fundamental pillar for the Apostles who could not neglect it (*cf. Acts 6:1-4*) because the Good News had to be proclaimed, following the command of Jesus, to all Nations (*cf. Mk 16:15*).

The relationship between Christ, the Word of the Father, and the Church, the home of the Word, is a vital one, into which every believer is called to enter personally⁷¹. Christ, the Word of the Father (*cf. Jn 12:49*), is the one who speaks, and his Word constitutes the Church as God's people. As Paul says, "*faith comes from what is heard and what is heard comes through the Word of Christ*" (*Rom 10:17*), that is, only those who hear the Word can become its heralds⁷². From the Church comes the voice that proclaims the Good News of salvation, and those who hear it become part of the Christian community. However, it is not enough to hear the Word; we must welcome it, live it and witness it through fraternal charity.

71 VD 51.

72 EG 149.

Church and Word of God are inseparably linked to one another. The Church lives from the Word of God and the Word of God resounds in the Church, in her teaching and in her life⁷³. In the Word of God proclaimed and heard, and in the sacraments, Jesus fulfils his promise: “*behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age*” (Mt 28:20).

THE PROCLAMATION OF THE KERYGMA AND THE PROCESSES OF CHRISTIAN INITIATION

From the beginnings of the Church, both the proclamation of the kerygma and the formation of the disciples in the faith are based on the preaching of the Word of God. The kerygma is the “very first proclamation”, which had as its actors both Jews and gentiles. Its content is the Good News of salvation for all humanity, fulfilled in Christ Jesus. It proclaims that Jesus is the Messiah proclaimed by the prophets; in Him are fulfilled all the promises of the Father contained in the Scriptures; He is the Son of God who through his life, death and resurrection attained the fullness of salvation for all humanity (cf. 1 Cor 15:3-8; Acts 2:14-39; Acts 3:12-26; Acts 4:8-12; Acts 5:29-32; Acts 10:34-43).

Those who were converted were baptized (cf. Acts 2:37-41) and began a process of catechetical instruction of Christian initiation designed to form disciples in the faith⁷⁴. The goal was to grow in the knowledge of Christ and in life-changing communion with Him and his way (cf. Acts 2:42). Through catechesis, the apostles sought to ensure that the Gospel fully illuminate the lives of the new disciples so that they might remain faithful in the Word of life (cf. Col 1 :3-8), so that it could become a source of permanent conversion and discernment of the Christian life.

Ignorance of the Scriptures is ignorance of Christ, says St. Jerome. The present situation of man and women in our communities, characterized by a crisis of faith, confirms the need for offering a way to deepen our knowledge of

73 Cf. DV 8.

74 Cf. DGC 49.

Christ, which, starting from the Word, invites us to conversion, faith, renewed hope and the practice of charity. Hence the need for a profound renewal of catechesis and of all the pastoral activity of the Church, in which the Word of God becomes the source of all the life and mission of the Church⁷⁵.

BIPM IS AT THE HEART OF THE ECCLESIOLOGY OF COMMUNION OF II VATICAN COUNCIL

BIPM develops in the context of integrated pastoral life, derived from the ecclesiology of communion of the Second Vatican Council. This form of pastoral care is based on the Trinitarian Mystery and is an expression of the Pauline image of the Church as the Body of Christ (*cf. 1 Cor 12:12-30*). It promotes communion and participation of all the members of the Church in the carrying out of its evangelizing activity. Integrated pastoral care, sustained by the personal encounter with Christ in the Word of God, is a living expression of the presence of Christ in his Church, who, through his Spirit, dwells in the hearts all believers and enables them to listen and embrace the Word and become its heralds (*cf. 1 Jn 1:1-4*).

The Church, image of the Trinity, is the communion of missionary disciples with ministries and charisms at the service of Christ, their head, and of the world. This communion is achieved when one understands the fundamental equal dignity of missionary disciples based on the common priesthood of the faithful, according to which we are all called to live the triple ministry of Christ as Priest, Prophet and King. This common identity means that evangelization is the task of all the baptized (bishops, presbyters, religious and laity) who, by their baptism, are invited to assume an attitude of ecclesial co-responsibility. In other words, “laypeople are not be regarded as ‘collaborators’ of the clergy, but as people who are really ‘co-responsible’ for the Church’s being and acting”⁷⁶.

⁷⁵ VD 1.

⁷⁶ Benedict XVI, *Message to the Sixth Ordinary Assembly of the International Forum of Catholic Action (IFCA)*, August 23, 2012.

The different functions and dimensions of the pastoral life of the Church must be nourished by the ever-living and effective source of the Word (*cf. Heb 4:12*), and be organized based on this awareness of co-responsibility in the task of evangelization. Hence, BIPM occupies a fundamental place within integrated pastoral life. With its three dimensions: interpretation, communion and evangelization, BIPM fulfils the task of cementing the Word of God contained in Sacred Scripture as a fundamental pillar of integrated pastoral life so that it is the heart of all ecclesial activity⁷⁷.

THE WORD OF GOD, LEAVEN FOR THE MISSIONARY DISCIPLE

The account of the naming of the Twelve in the Gospel of Mark shows that Jesus called the Twelve with two clear objectives: to be with Him and to send them out to preach (*cf. Mk 3:14*). It is in “being with Him,” that the disciple is formed, listening intently to the words of Jesus, knowing the true face of the Father (*cf. Jn 14:8-9*), receiving the new life (*cf. Jn 6:35*) and finding the truth through the Spirit (*cf. Jn 16:12-15*). In the encounter with Jesus, the hearts of the disciples discover a new orientation for life, are filled with delight and joy and they become witnesses, accepting the mission entrusted to them by Jesus himself (*cf. 1 Jn 1:1-4*).

To strengthen the Christian identity of the missionary disciples, Sacred Scripture is to be presented to them as source of an authentic disciple spirituality. In this sense, the Word of God calls for an attentive listener and a generous obedience. Jesus expresses it clearly: a disciple is one who listens to the Word and puts it into practice (*cf. Lk 8:21; Lk 6:47-49*). The vocation of the Christian is to live in a permanent dialogue of intimate communion with the Lord, through Sacred Scripture. Listening to the Word is not just one option among many, but a constitutive element of the Christian identity of the missionary disciple, whose parameters, values and attitudes must be enlightened by those of Christ.

77 VD 1.

BIPM AND OPENNESS TO LISTENING TO THE WORD

The prayerful reading of Scripture leads to attentive listening, which in turn implies obedience to the Word; that is, to following Christ. The key to furthering this process is found in the dialogue of Jesus with the Emmaus disciples. First, Jesus teaches the disciples that the understanding of Scripture requires its enlightenment by the fulfilment of the plan of salvation willed by the Father: *“Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and enter into his glory? Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them what referred to him in all the scriptures”*. (Luke 24:26-27). And secondly, Jesus opens the eyes of his companions to the knowledge and acceptance by faith of God’s saving plan: *“With that their eyes were opened and they recognized him, but he vanished from their sight”*. (Lk 24:31). Thus, he arouses in them the burning in their hearts which brings them back to the path of faith: *“Were not our hearts burning within us while he spoke to us on the way and opened the scriptures to us?”* (Lk 24:32).

To facilitate a listening of the Word that leads to the following of Christ, certain dispositions are required. Among them are:

- a) **Silence.-** “The Word can only be spoken and heard in silence, outward and inward”⁷⁸. It is therefore necessary to form the people of God in the value of silence to discover the sense of recollection and inner quiet, following the example of Mary, who teaches us to be silent, permitting the Word resonate in our hearts (cf. Lk. 1:26 -38).
- b) **Faith and an open heart.-** Along with the necessary approach to biblical texts through exegesis, the key to understanding each biblical text is the search for the relationship of the text to God’s plan of salvation for all humanity. We find this attitude, for example, in the story of Ethiopian Eunuch (Acts 8:26-40).

78 VD 66.

- c) **Purity of heart.-** We frequently approach the reading of Sacred Scripture with preconceived ideas that must be put aside if we are to discover the newness of the Word that enables a dialogue, always new, fruitful and genuine with the Lord. This attitude is found, for example, in Lydia (*Acts 16:11-15*).
- d) **Docility to the Spirit of God.-** The Word has been given to us to find Christ and to embrace Him. The appropriate attitude of the disciple is that of openness to being challenged by the Lord and for redirecting life towards Him. To do this, it is necessary to be docile to the movements of the Holy Spirit and to be able to accept that there are certain aspects of our lives in need of conversion to Christ. We encounter this attitude, for example, in Mary of Bethany (*cf. Lk 10:38-42*).

ORGANIZING BIPM AND TEAMS OF BIBLICAL INSPIRATION OF ALL PASTORAL MINISTRY

BIPM develops in the context of integrated pastoral care based on an ecclesiology of communion. In this context, we are all responsible for promoting and becoming familiar with the Word of God, both personally and at the pastoral level, while also assuming co-responsibility in the proclamation of the Word. This means a change of mentality that implies pastoral conversion. That is why it is necessary to have a BIPM team in the diocese or parish that stimulates this process. This team should be composed of persons who participate in different specific pastoral ministries (catechesis, youth ministry, family, social, health, etc.), so that it can establish links to all parish or diocesan pastoral activities. Its fundamental task is to promote the organization of pastoral and spiritual processes inspired by the Word of God and animated by it. It is not a matter of reducing all ministries to the preaching and teaching of Sacred Scripture, but rather that the Word illuminates the discipleship of Christians and their commitment to the Church and to the world. In this sense, the mission of the Biblical Pastoral team is to offer the Word of God as an inspiring source for the content of the pastoral activity of the Church so that all pastoral plans of

dioceses and parishes are inspired and are sustained and evaluated from the perspective of the Word of God⁷⁹.

To carry out this task, it is recommended that the team include biblical scholars and exegetes, but an indispensable condition is that all the members of the BIPM team, whether priests, religious or laity, are persons in love with the Word and with God, and that they have the Word as the foundation of their lives and live a close relationship with it. Likewise, it is important that the bishop and the priests take a leading role in supporting and accompanying the formation of these teams. At the national level, each Episcopal Conference needs to have a National Commission for Biblical Inspiration of the entire Pastoral Ministry, which has a functional organization and supports the implementation of BIPM in dioceses, deaneries and parishes⁸⁰.

ACTIVITIES OF THE BIPM TEAMS

It is the responsibility of the BIPM teams to ensure that all pastoral care of the Church (catechesis, liturgy, social ministry, health ministry, youth ministry, pastoral ministry for the clergy and diaconate, vocation ministry, family life ministry, ecumenical and interreligious dialogue, etc.), are grounded in the Word of God.

Concrete action should be identified within the framework of the pastoral guidelines of the diocese and the needs of each pastoral ministry and its actors. All possible action will have the aim of making the Word of God the source that inspires and nourishes the whole pastoral action of the Church so that Christ may be all in all (*Col 3:11*).

In short, the BIPM teams should aim to make the Word of God the sap that runs through the trunk of the tree that is the Church and reaches all its branches.

79 Silva S., The Word of God in the Church and in its Ecclesial Activity, *La Palabra de Dios en la Iglesia y en su actividad eclesial*, Consejo Episcopal Latinoamericano, Colección de autores No 41, 2013 P. 211

80 Ibid, p.212.

In other words, the BIPM teams should strive for Sacred Scripture to become the backbone that shapes and supports the pastoral ministry of the Church. All pastoral work should have a greater biblical focus⁸¹.



A fundamental mission of the BIPM teams is to promote the formation of small communities made up of families located in a parish or linked to ecclesial movements, which promote formation, prayer and knowledge of the Bible, within the faith of the Church⁸².

In addition, the BIPM teams also have the task of establishing links with the existing academic structures in each location, creating centres of biblical formation where lay people and missionaries learn to understand, live and proclaim the Word of God⁸³.

81 Ibid, p.212.

82 Cf. VD 75.

83 VD 73.



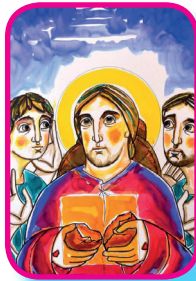
Readings suggested for further Study

Chapter 4

- ✧ *II VATICAN COUNCIL, Dogmatic Constitution Lumen Gentium on the Church (1964), Nos. 9-17. Available at www.vatican.va*
- ✧ *Message to the People of God from the XII Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops (2008), Chapter 3. Available at www.vatican.va*
- ✧ *BENEDICT XVI, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation Verbum Domini (2008), Nos. 72-120. Available at www.vatican.va*
- ✧ *FRANCIS, Apostolic Exhortation Evangelii Gaudium (2013), Nos. 160-258. Available at www.Vatican.va*
- ✧ *SILVA S., La Palabra de Dios en la Iglesia y en su actividad eclesial, Consejo Episcopal Latinoamericano, Colección Autores No 41 (2013), pp. 311-317.*

LECTIO GUIDE

**“WE ARE A COMMUNITY THAT LIVES
UNITED IN CELEBRATING THE WORD”**



*He has sent his Word proclaiming
the Good News of Peace*

Acts 10:36

STEP 1 – Reading: Acts 10 :34-48

- ✧ What does the reading say about the Word of God?

STEP 2 - Meditation

- ✧ What are the foundations that give life to our community?
- ✧ How are we announcing the kerygma?
- ✧ What is the place of the Word of God in our discipleship formation processes?

STEP 3 – Prayer

- ✧ We pray and bless the Lord for His Word, which arouses faith and life in communion in our communities ...
- ✧ We ask forgiveness for our lack of commitment to the proclamation of the Word ...
- ✧ We ask the Lord to give us the gift of living communion in the light of His Word ...

STEP 4 - Contemplation/Action

- ✧ We are enveloped by the love that God communicates to us through His Word ...
- ✧ We open ourselves to be challenged by the proclamation of the kerygma...
- ✧ We define some pastoral strategies that help us grow in communion in the light of the Word.

CHAPTER 5


WE NOURISH OUR FAITH WITH THE BREAD OF THE WORD



*He took bread, said the blessing,
broke it, and gave it to them.*

Lk 24:30

CHRIST, BREAD OF LIFE IN HIS WORD AND IN THE EUCCHARIST

he primary objective of BIPM is to foster encounter with Jesus Christ through living contact with Scripture. And this is precisely what happens to the disciples on the way to Emmaus, when Jesus, walking along with them (*cf. Luke 24:13-24*), leads them to meet him, first in the Word that he himself explains to them (*cf. Lk 24:25-27*), then in the breaking of the bread, Eucharistic gesture, and finally in the re-encounter with the Christian community (*cf. Lk 24:28-31, 33-35*). In this way, Luke reminds us that whenever the community proclaims the Word and it is explained, and whenever the bread is broken in the Eucharist, the encounter with the risen Lord is possible, just as it happened to the Emmaus disciples the on that first Easter Sunday.

The presence of Jesus, first with his words and then with the act of breaking bread, made it possible for the disciples to recognize him. Now they were able to appreciate in a new way all that they had previously experienced with him: “Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures?” (Lk 24:32)⁸⁴.

The Gospels demonstrate that Christ is the Bread of Life (*cf. Jn 6:63*), that comes to satisfy all our deepest needs. In the Gospels we discover that Jesus is not only concerned with the hunger of Israel, but also with the hunger of the crowd that followed him. He felt compassion for them all and He fed them (*cf. Mk 6:34-44*). As the Bread of Life, he willed that his Word and his Body remain forever as living signs of his Love for us. Jesus, the Bread of Life in his Word and in the Eucharist, which becomes food and drink of salvation, is sent by the Father for the salvation of all humanity (*cf. Jn 3:16; Lk 22:19-20*).

The mission of the Church, entrusted us by the Lord himself, is to share this Bread of Life “both of God’s Word and of Christ’s Body, especially in the sacred liturgy”⁸⁵. To carry out this mandate, it is vitally important that all its pastoral and ecclesial activity be animated by the Word of God and nourished by it for the Christian life.

In the celebration of the Eucharist the Word is proclaimed, a privileged moment to know the mystery of Christ and to foster a vital encounter with him, and then, the Lord is received as Eucharistic nourishment that invites us to full communion so that he becomes All in All (*cf. Col 3:16*). The act of receiving Holy Communion in the Eucharist is then transformed into an act of uniting to the proclaimed Word.

Word and Eucharist are intimately linked with each other, so that the proclaimed Word permeates the life of the believing community that hears it, and the same community, when receiving the Eucharistic bread, confirms that it welcomes the Word and wants to live by it. From this emanates the sacramental character of the Word. Just as when we partake of the Eucharistic banquet, we truly receive the body and blood of Christ, when the Word of God is proclaimed in the celebration, it is Christ Himself who is present and addresses us⁸⁶.

85 DV 21.

86 Cf. VD 56.

THE WORD OF GOD IN THE LITURGY AND IN THE SACRAMENTS

The Liturgy celebrates the mystery of Christ; that is, his salvific action achieved through his words and deeds. All the liturgical actions are directed, therefore, to worshipping the Father, through Jesus Christ, in the Holy Spirit, for the sanctification of each of the faithful who form the Church of Christ. Hence, as the home of the Word, the Church must especially ensure that the Word, privileged mediation through which God addresses his people⁸⁷, is the source of inspiration for all liturgical action. The Liturgy thus has to do with life and its celebration, and it has to do above all with our salvation.

When reading Sacred Scripture in the Liturgy of the Church, whether in the celebration of the sacraments or sacramental rites, it is Christ himself who speaks, so that the liturgical celebration is a fruitful dialogue between the Lord and his disciples, mediated by the Holy Spirit⁸⁸. In the Liturgy, God speaks to his people and the people respond to God, both by song and prayer⁸⁹. The Church knows that when she opens the Scriptures, she always finds in them the divine Word and the action of the Spirit, because the living voice of the Gospel resonates in the Church⁹⁰. It is the action of the Spirit that animates the Word proclaimed in the faithful by moving them to welcome it by faith and to put it into practice. Likewise, in the Liturgy, the Spirit acts through the Word proclaimed to foster the unity of believers, so that they may all be one in Christ (*cf. Jn 17:21*), and to elicit their various charisms, corresponding to the needs of each community (*cf. 1 Cor 12:4-11*).

One of the challenges that BIPM must address is to make clear the deep unity between the Word, the liturgy and the sacraments in the pastoral action of the Church⁹¹. The Liturgy of the Word is an essential part of the celebration

87 Cf. VD 52.

88 Cf. SC 24.

89 Cf. SC 33.

90 Cf. DV 8,9,21.

91 VD 53.

of each of the sacraments of the Church. The Word proclaims and explains what the sacrament accomplishes in the person who receives it. Hence it is necessary that sacramental catechesis is also inspired by the Word, so that the faithful can understand in depth the meaning of the sacrament they receive. In this sense, BIPM has the mission of helping the faithful to discover the “performative” character of the Word, which is based on the fact that the Word fulfils in the faithful what it proclaims (*cf. Is 55:10-11*).

COMMUNITY CELEBRATIONS OF THE WORD

Sacred Scripture is the living testimony of a community, of the People of Israel (Old Testament) and of the early Church (New Testament), and as such has been entrusted to the Church so that all Christian communities have life in Christ (*cf. Jn 10:10*). Hence another task of BIPM is to encourage the conducting of community celebrations of the Word, to awaken a growing love for it in our communities. These celebrations seek to highlight its central place and facilitate a better understanding and interiorization of the Word, so that it becomes a source of unity and light for the daily life of the community.

It is recommended that these community celebrations of the Word be held during the week, to prepare and enrich the participation of the faithful in the Sunday Eucharist. The goal is for believers to have the opportunity to understand the biblical readings that will be proclaimed on Sunday, to pray with them and to “ruminate” on the Word during the week, so as to listen to it and embrace it with a well-disposed heart during the Sunday Eucharistic celebration⁹². Likewise, it will be necessary to conduct these communal celebrations of the Word in all those communities where, due to the shortage of priests, it is not possible to celebrate the Sunday Eucharist or on holydays⁹³.

There are other important moments in the life of the faithful that can be accompanied by celebrations of the Word, such as pilgrimages, feast days,

92 Cf. VD 65.

93 Cf. VD 65.

popular missions, spiritual retreats and special days of penance, reparation and forgiveness. It is also of vital importance that the various forms of popular piety be accompanied by BIPM so that they may too be inspired by the Word.

In view of the above challenges, it is necessary “as many Ministers of the Word as possible are able effectively to provide the nourishment of the Scriptures for the people of God, to enlighten their minds, to strengthen their wills and set their hearts on fire with the love of God”⁹⁴. Therefore, it will be a primary task of BIPM to form ministers or servants of the Word who can guide these community celebrations of the Word. These are persons who, having been instructed in the knowledge of Sacred Scripture, have a live-giving commitment to it and the human and communicative skills necessary to prompt a similar live-giving encounter with the Word in those who attend these celebrations.

IMPORTANCE OF THE HOMILY

The homily is part of the liturgical proclamation of the Word; it is the dialogue that God seeks to maintain with his people through the Word proclaimed. Therefore, the homily is meant to be an instance of comforting encounter with the God of the Word, a source of constant renewal and growth⁹⁵. Its purpose is to proclaim God’s wonderful works in the history of salvation, which constitute the mystery of Christ⁹⁶. It is also the presence of the Lord, because “*Christ is present in his Church as she preaches, since the Gospel which she proclaims is the word of God, and it is only in the name of Christ, the Incarnate Word of God, and by His authority and with His help that it is preached (...)*”⁹⁷.

Within the liturgical celebration, the homily is designed “*to foster a deeper understanding of the word of God, so that it can bear fruit in the lives*

94 DV 23.

95 Cf. EG 136-137.

96 SC 35.

97 MF 20.

of the faithful”⁹⁸. Its function is to “bring the scriptural message to life in a way that helps the faithful to realize that God’s word is present and at work in their everyday lives”⁹⁹. Moreover, it “should lead to an understanding of the mystery being celebrated, serve as a summons to mission, and prepare the assembly for the profession of faith, the universal prayer and the Eucharistic liturgy”¹⁰⁰. Both the faithful and the preacher must keep in mind that the goal of the homily is to discover Christ, present in the Scriptures, and Christ present today.

The homily should be a subject of special attention for BIPM, in that it can contribute exegetical and communicative tools that help preachers to achieve a better understanding of biblical texts and to develop communicative skills to improve their presentation. To prepare the homily, the preacher should have one ear attuned to the Word and the other to the people¹⁰¹. Thus, another way to help prepare for the homily is to encourage preachers to hold *Lectio Divina* meetings with the Sunday Gospel reading in their communities where these participate by praying and sharing the Word as members of the community. In this way, preachers can better understand the reality of their community and how the Word touches the hearts of people, a condition that is indispensable for achieving a relevant actualization of the Word in the homily.

However,

The preacher ought first to develop a great personal familiarity with the word of God. Knowledge of its linguistic or exegetical aspects, though certainly necessary, is not enough. There is the need to approach the word with a docile and prayerful heart so

98 VD 59.

99 Ibid.

100 Ibid.

101 Cf. EG 154.

that it may deeply penetrate the preacher's thoughts and feelings and bring about a new mindset¹⁰².

The Sunday readings will resonate with all their splendour in the hearts of the congregation if they first similarly resonated in the heart of the pastor.

THE WORD THAT BECOMES DIALOGUE IN PRAYER: THE PSALMS

The Word of God in Sacred Scripture is the gift of God that invites us to a dialogue of friendship with him. The Word helps us to join this dialogue through prayer¹⁰³, with Jesus himself as the supreme model of prayer in the Gospels (*cf. Lk 3:21; 5:16*). Every passage in the Bible is an invitation to dialogue with the Lord; moreover, the same Scripture teaches us to pray through the Psalms. The Psalmists' prayer is a prayer inspired by the Holy Spirit; that is, in the Psalms we learn to speak to God with the words that God himself inspired in each psalmist. The Psalms are a school of prayer that teaches us to live life always oriented towards God, placing our daily lives before him. In them and also in other books of Scripture, we find a range of forms of prayer, such as prayer for intercession (*cf. Ex 33:12-16*), the exultant song of victory (*cf. Ex 15*), in sorrow at the difficulties experienced in carrying out our mission (*cf. Jer 20:7-18*), psalms of praise (*cf. Ps 8, 33, 103, 122, among others*), of thanksgiving (*cf. Ps 18, 27, 65, 118, 144, among others*), of supplication in affliction (*cf. Ps 22, 28, among others*), of pleading for pardon (*cf. Ps 32, 38, 51, among others*), etc. Through prayer grounded in the Word, the believer discovers the dialogical character of all Christian revelation, and our whole human existence becomes a dialogue with God who speaks and listens, who calls and gives direction to our life, giving it its full meaning.

¹⁰² EG 149.

¹⁰³ Cf. VD 24-25.

THE WORD PRAYED IN *LECTIO DIVINA*

“The Word of God is at the basis of all authentically Christian spirituality,”¹⁰⁴. Hence, the inescapable task of BIPM is the promotion of a prayerful approach to biblical texts. Among the many ways of approaching Sacred Scripture is a privileged form, *Lectio Divina* or prayerful reading of the Word of God¹⁰⁵. This practice, which forms part of a very ancient tradition of the Church, leads to intimacy with Christ in prayer. Now this is an intimacy that does not linger in an a self-absorbed, individualistic, or spiritualising reading, but an intimacy that inspires the following of Christ in community. Faith is born, grows and sustains itself in the Christian community, with its rich tradition in reading and listening to the Word.

There are several methods of practicing the prayerful reading of the Word, all of them valuable and necessary in response to the realities of varied communities. However, we would like to propose here the *Lectio Divina* method, which with its four steps: Reading, Meditation, Prayer and Contemplation-Action, has the capacity to unlock for the faithful the treasures of the Word of God and to bring about encounter with Jesus Christ, the living Word of God¹⁰⁶. However, it should not be forgotten that as a method that helps us to encounter Jesus Christ in the Scriptures, the goal of *Lectio Divina* is not *Lectio* itself, but rather the intimate encounter with Christ.

104 VD 86.

105 Cf. AD 249.

106 Cf. XII Ordinary General Assembly Synod of Bishops, *Final Message of the People of God* (2007), Chapter 3. Available at www.vatican.va

Here is a summary table of the four steps of the method of *Lectio Divina*:

| | STEP | OBJECTIVE | KEY QUESTION |
|--|--|------------------------------------|---|
|  | STEP 1 READING | UNDERSTAND The Word | What does the text say? |
|  | STEP 2 MEDITATION | WELCOME The Word | What is God saying to me/us in the text? |
|  | STEP 3 PRAYER | RESPOND To the Word | What do I/we say to God motivated by the biblical text? |
|  | STEP 4 CONTEMPLATION ACTION | INSPIRE Life in The Word | How do I/we experience the presence of God through the biblical text? What does the text motivate me/us to do in the light of my/our conversion to Christ? |

We give thanks to God because *Lectio Divina* or Prayerful Reading is now a common practice in our Latin American and Caribbean communities, to the point that it has become a transforming force that has promoted the implementation of BIPM in its three dimensions, although it must be stressed that *Lectio* is not the totality of BIPM.

It must be admitted that because of the wide popularity that this method of prayer has enjoyed, in many places BIPM has come to be identified with *Lectio Divina*, something which evidently, is far from what BIPM is intended to be.

Undoubtedly, this practice can be a point of entry to the BIPM process but we should avoid the risk of restricting BIPM to *Lectio*. At the same time, it should be said that experience shows that communities that practice Prayerful Reading (Dimension of Communion) do begin to live their lives to the rhythm of the Word, and seek to know the Scriptures better so as to learn how to interpret them (Dimension of Interpretation) and centre all their pastoral activities and missionary initiatives on the Word (Dimension of Evangelization).



Readings suggested for further Study

Chapter 5

- ✱ *II VATICAN COUNCIL*, *Dogmatic Constitution Sacrosanctum Concilium, on the Sacred Liturgy* (1963), Nos. 7, 10, 24, 35, 51. Available at www.vatican.va
- ✱ *BENEDICT XVI*, *Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation Verbum Domini* (2008), Nos. 50-71-86-88. Available at www.vatican.va
- ✱ *FRANCIS*, *Apostolic Exhortation Evangelii Gaudium* (2013), Nos. 135-159. Available at www.Vatican.va
- ✱ *SILVA S.*, *La Palabra de Dios en la Iglesia y en su actividad eclesial, Consejo Episcopal Latinoamericano, Colección Autores No 41* (2013), pp. 227-284.

LECTIO GUIDE

**“WE ARE A COMMUNITY NOURISHED ON
THE BREAD OF THE WORD”**



*“I am the living bread that came
down from heaven”*

Jn 6:51

STEP 1 – Reading: Jn 6:51-71

- ✱ What does the reading say about Jesus?

STEP 2 – Meditation

- ✱ What is the relationship I/we see in our community between Liturgy, Word and Eucharist?
- ✱ What concrete actions exist in our community to help prepare the Liturgy of the Word with a view to the celebration of the Sunday Eucharist?
- ✱ What kind of community celebrations in Palava do we know? What are done in our community?

STEP 3 - Prayer

- ✱ We pray and bless Jesus, living bread come down from heaven who is Word and Eucharist ...
- ✱ We ask forgiveness for not opening our hearts to an attentive and faithful listening to the Word, proclaimed in the Eucharist ...
- ✱ We request the Lord to help us discover the unity between the Word and the Eucharist so that we learn to live what we proclaim...

STEP 4 - Contemplation/Action

- ✱ We savour the Word we have heard in this encounter ...
- ✱ We commit ourselves to entering the rhythm of the Liturgical Year, preparing during the week to listen to the Word that will be proclaimed on Sunday in the Eucharist ...
- ✱ We identify some pastoral strategies that help people listen and meditate during the week on the Word that will be proclaimed the Sunday ...

CHAPTER 6


BIPM MINISTERS BEAR THE WORD OF GOD IN THEIR HEARTS



*Were not our hearts burning [within us]
while he spoke to us on the way
and opened the scriptures to us?*

Lk 24:32

IDENTITY OF THE MISSIONARY DISCIPLE MINISTER OF BIPM

he purpose of BIPM is to promote reading, interpreting, meditation, application, celebration and proclamation of the Word of God in the Christian community, so that it becomes their nourishment and builds the community, fostering the conversion of its members and enflaming the hearts of all for mission and solidarity. In other words, all the members of the community should become persons who live the personal and communal spiritual life, inspired and animated by the Word. This project entails a personal and pastoral conversion that invites the abandoning of outdated structures and formation modalities that lack the richness of the Word of God, and embracing the creation of integrated pastoral care, in which the Word is the source of inspiration for all activities and formation so that all members become men and women who carry the Word in their hearts and proclaim it in the first place by their personal witness.

a) The BIPM Minister, a believer touched by the Word of God

The proclamation of the Word of God is a task for all the baptized, without exception. However, the bishop has a primary responsibility in ensuring that the Word is proclaimed to the entire community he presides over¹⁰⁷. Hence the bishop is the main minister of BIPM in his diocese. Therefore, it is he who appoints those responsible for implementing BIPM so that the Word of God becomes the soul of evangelization and mission in his diocese.

107 Cf. DV 25; VD 79.

The proclamation of the Word is a ministry of the presbyters and deacons. They are to encourage the Church's pastoral mission from and with the bread of the Word and the Eucharist. They are responsible for promoting parish BIPM activities, so that the Word may become light and give life to every situation.

Those in Religious and Consecrated life, as well as the lay faithful, are also co-responsible in the task of proclaiming the Gospel. In short, all the baptized are the recipients and bearers of BIPM and, at the same time, we are called to be BIPM Ministers, listening to the Word, living it out and proclaiming it in the specific spheres in which we live out our faith, whether in family life, work or through a particular charism.

BIPM Ministers are persons who live their lives to the rhythm of the Word and become missionary disciples of the Lord. They are simple and humble listeners, who dwell within the Word and allow themselves to be protected and nourished by it as if by a mother's womb¹⁰⁸. Likewise, BIPM Ministers live permanently cultivating a great personal familiarity with the Word, *"approaching the Word with a docile and prayerful heart so that it may deeply penetrate their thoughts and feelings and bring about a new outlook in them, the mind of Christ"*¹⁰⁹. BIPM Ministers allow themselves to be challenged by the Word and seek to make it their own to incarnate it in their lives and give birth to it in others. In this way, their words, their decisions and their attitudes are increasingly and conspicuously those of Christ himself. In short, BIPM Ministers in faithfully hearing the Word, are so pierced by the Word that they begin to become transformed into other Christs for the Church: *"it is no longer I, I who live, but Christ lives in me"* (Gal 2:20).

b) Need for the kerygmatic experience

The formation of BIPM Ministers requires a return to the first proclamation, the kerygma, since this is the key to understanding the Scriptures in depth. The whole Bible is a function of the kerygma; the Old Testament prepares it and

108 Cf. VD 79.

109 VD 80.

the New Testament proclaims it. Christ dead and Raised for the salvation of all is the one who opens us to the understanding of all the Scriptures and is the one who gives life to the Word in us, through the Spirit. In the personal and communal encounter with Him in the light of the Word, missionary disciples come to know the Lord who heals, forgives and saves and, at the same time, they discover the strength of the Word to transform their own history into History of Salvation. This encounter, in giving new and full meaning to their lives, thus becomes the solid foundation of their existence, which drives them to communicate “everywhere, in an outpouring of gratitude and joy, the gift of the encounter with Jesus Christ”¹¹⁰.

c) The human experience of the BIPM Minister

BIPM Ministers seek to subject their entire lives to the Word, so that all human dimensions -affective, psychological and spiritual- are illuminated by its light. Likewise, the Word seeks to become a complete source of meaning in all facets of the person: personal, family, work, social, economic, religious, etc. Jesus Christ wants to take on the full human existence of every person, so the proclamation of the Gospel must impact all these realities. The action of exposing life to the light of the Word is ever present throughout the entire formative process of missionary disciples and their entire journey into the deepening of the mystery of Christ that illuminates the different facets of their existence.

d) The experience of faith of the BIPM Minister

The spiritual experience of BIPM Ministers is marked by the central place of the Word in their experience of faith. BIPM Ministers listen to the Word with a generous and open heart; they bear fruit through perseverance (*cf. Lk 8:15*). The Word revealed, communicated, explained, lived, celebrated and witnessed, becomes the light for their personal life and the life of others, enabling them to respond with a noble and generous heart to the Lord’s call. This response,

110 AD 14.

moved and animated by the Spirit, consists specifically in adopting the lifestyle of Christ set out in the Gospels. It is a commitment of faithful and persevering following of the Lord, which translates into concrete service in the Church: biblically animating all the pastoral life of the Church.

IDENTITY, KNOWLEDGE AND ACTIVITY OF THE BIPM MINISTER

a) Identity of the BIPM Minister

The identity of the BIPM Minister is based on the Lord's call: "*Come after me and I will make you fishers of men*" (Mk 1:17). While, within the Christian community, people seek the Lord, they need to experience his call to become his disciples; hence BIPM has the mission first to acknowledge the yearnings of people - "*What are you looking for?*" (Jn 1:38), then to foster a personal encounter with Christ- "*Come and see!*" (Jn 1:39) -which gives rise to Christian initiation and then to discipleship¹¹¹ - "*So they went and saw where he was staying and they stayed with him that day*" (Jn 1:39). That is, people know that Jesus is calling them to live in His presence, in friendship with Him. However, if they have not had a life changing experience of encounter with Him, in which "their heart burns", it is life-changing for them to enter the dynamic process of dialogue with the Lord. BIPM will thus have a responsibility for fostering and guiding this initial encounter with Christ that generates this life-changing bond to Him.

Now, this initial encounter is the beginning of a journey with the Lord that will finally lead to acknowledgement and confession of faith in Jesus Christ: "*Teacher, you are the Son of God, you are the King of Israel!*" (Jn 1:49). "This encounter must be constantly renewed by personal testimony, proclamation of the kerygma and the missionary action of the Church"¹¹². In addition, the

111 Cf. AD 278

112 AD 278

witness of community life is important, because “there can be no community life except in community: in families, parishes... the disciples take part in the life of the Church and in the encounter with the brothers and sisters, living love of Christ in solidarity, in fraternal life”¹¹³.

b) The knowledge of BIPM Ministers

BIPM Ministers must know, first, the goal of BIPM; that is, be clear that it is the guiding of others to encounter Christ through the mediation of the Word. “As they get to know and love their Lord, disciples experience the need to share with others their joy at being sent, at going to the world to proclaim Jesus Christ, crucified and risen,”¹¹⁴.

Secondly, BIPM Ministers must be able to discern the signs of the times, so that they may find the best way to announce Jesus Christ in the present society, marked, among other things, by inequality, mistrust, individualism, consumerism and religious indifference. It will then be necessary to have an in-depth knowledge of the content of the message they will communicate; “otherwise, how could they proclaim a message whose content and spirit they do not know thoroughly? We must build our missionary commitment and the whole of our lives on the rock of the word of God”¹¹⁵.

c) The know-how of the BIPM Ministers

BIPM Ministers know the message they proclaim because they remain united to the Lord and his Word (*cf. Jn 15:7-11*). However, it requires developing the ability to work as a team, since the mission is not a private matter, but a matter of the Church, the community, the parish and the diocese.

*Life in the Spirit does not enclose us in
cosy intimacy, but makes us generous and*

113 Ibid.

114 Ibid.

115 AD 247.

creative persons, happy in proclamation and missionary service. We become committed to the demands of reality and able to find a profound significance for everything that we are entrusted with doing for the Church and for the world¹¹⁶.

This implies knowing how to discern and recognize in community what are the problems of the immediate reality where the disciples of the Lord live and bear witness to their faith. It means seeking, in the light of the Word, joint strategies that aim to present the Word as the place to we can find answers to address problems and see them in a new light.

d) Ability to wonder at the Word

Sacred Scripture has two subjects. On the one hand, there is the divine subject, God, who speaks to make himself known, and on the other hand there is the human subject, men and women of all generations to whom God directs the Word so that they may have life in abundance. The testimony of the apostles shows us that this Word causes diverse reactions. Some reject it by excluding themselves from eternal life (*cf. Acts 12:46*); others accept it with the joy of the Holy Spirit, even amidst great affliction (*cf. 1 Thess 1:6*), and they hear it so that it bears fruit and grows in them and in the communities (*cf. Col 1:6*). Those who humbly welcome it as doers who act (*cf. Jas 1:19-25*), who hold fast to attain salvation (*cf. 1 Cor 15:1-2*) and glorify it (*Acts 13:48*), so that the Word dwells in them (*cf. Col 3:16*), to the point of their being able to endure harsh trials in its proclamation (*Col 1:24-29*).

The BIPM Minister is a missionary disciple who is always surprised by the freshness of the Gospel, which has the capacity to illuminate the various circumstances of the daily life. “*I make all things new!*” says Jesus, and with this phrase he invites us to develop a capacity for wonder at the ever-new and contemporary Word. The richness of the Word is inexhaustible, so we can never

116 AD285.

say that we know the Bible fully. Every time we read a biblical text, we discover new things that the Lord wants to reveal to us. Because of this, those who approach a biblical narrative, thinking that they already know it all, squander its richness.

Scripture itself teaches us that the Word can be reinterpreted in new ways, in response to new historical contexts which reveal new aspects of God's plan that continue to unfold in contemporary history. A clear example of this is the reading by Jesus in the synagogue of the scroll of Isaiah (*cf. Lk 4:14-21; Is 61:1-2*). After reading the passage, Jesus says: *"Today this scripture passage is fulfilled in your hearing"* (*Lk 4:21*). These are the same words that Isaiah had spoken about Him more than 500 years earlier, which now, in Jesus, attain their full meaning. Someone reading this passage today could reinterpret it with the guidance of the Holy Spirit and discover in it the call of God to proclaim the Good News to the poor in today's world.

e) Celebratory capacity and teacher of prayer

BIPM Ministers are also persons who educate people in reading, listening, meditating, praying and celebrating the Word. They are persons able to accompany their brothers and sisters spiritually in the faith, inviting them to discover the Word of God as source of life, which strengthens faith, renews hope and teaches us to live out fraternal charity. BIPM Ministers are persons who live their lives to the rhythm of the Word that the Liturgy proposes to them every day, with a humble and docile heart, making of the listened Word their rule of life, and answering with Mary: *"May it be done to me according to your word"* (*Lk 1:38*).

They are also missionary disciples celebrating the Word and teaching people to celebrate life, with its sorrows and joys, in the light of the Word. Thus, the BIPM Minister teaches others to discern the path of God in the situations of daily life. How is this done? By helping the reader to identify with the characters of the narrative, or with some of the attitudes that the characters display or also by helping the discernment of what God says to a certain character may be what he wants to say to me today, for example, inviting me to conversion and a change of life.

BIBLICAL FORMATION FOR BIPM MINISTERS

In the Latin American and Caribbean Church, there is an enormous array of biblical formation options. This speaks of the immense richness that the Word of God already plays in our communities. However, with a view to offering concrete tools to those who do not have access to them, a simple proposal is presented here on biblical formation appropriate for BIPM Ministers. It consists in of taking as a model the route of the Word incarnate via the first witnesses, the apostles, beginning with the Gospels, following by the book of Acts, which tells us about the birth of the Church and the way in which the apostles fulfilled the mandate of Christ to proclaim the Gospel to all nations, and then continuing with the life of the first Christian communities that we know about through Paul's letters and the so-called Catholic Letters.

However, given the importance of the mission of BIPM - to put the Word of God at the centre of the life and mission of the Church, as a wellspring of constant source of renewal, to be at the heart of every ecclesial activity¹¹⁷ - it is necessary that the BIPM Ministers have access to an integral biblical formation that addresses, at least, the following specific objectives:

- ✧ To know what the Bible is, how it was formed, its structure and the main guidelines for reading the Old and New Testaments.
- ✧ To become familiar with the tools necessary for interpreting and contextualizing the Bible.
- ✧ To value the Bible as the Word of God, as the revelation of the Mystery of God and His plan for us.
- ✧ To foster an attitude of acceptance and embracing of the Word of God.
- ✧ To develop an attitude of permanent reference to the Word and to the revelation of God's saving plan for the human person.
- ✧ To orientate and structure personal and community life through listening to and receiving the Word.

117 Cf. VD 1.



Readings suggested for further Study

Chapter 6

- ✧ *BENEDICT XVI, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation Verbum Domini (2008), Nos. 73-85. Available at www.vatican.va.*
- ✧ *FRANCIS, Apostolic Exhortation Evangelii Gaudium (2013), Nos. 160-175. Available at www.vatican.va.*
- ✧ *SILVA S., La Palabra de Dios en la Iglesia y en su actividad eclesial, Consejo Episcopal Latinoamericano, Colección Autores No 41 (2013), pp.188-226.*

LECTIO GUIDE

**“WE ARE COMMUNITY THAT PROCLAIMS
THE WORD IN AND OUT OF SEASON”**



“The seed is the Word of God”

Lk 8:11

STEP 1 – Reading: Lk 8:4-15

- ✱ What does the reading say about the Word of God?

STEP 2 - Meditation

- ✱ I/we remember concrete persons who sowed the seed of the Word in us. How would you describe them?
- ✱ How do I/we sow the seed of the Word in our community? In what way do I/we cultivate the seed and foster its growth?
- ✱ What difficulties do I/we have in sowing and cultivating the seed? What situations foster sowing and cultivating the seed?

STEP 3 – Prayer

- ✱ We praise and bless the Lord for the people who have sown and nurtured the seed of the Word in us ...
- ✱ We ask forgiveness because we have often been negligent and we have not been watering the seed ...
- ✱ We ask the Lord to bless us with the gift of perseverance to sow the seed and cultivate it with a noble and generous heart ...

STEP 4 - Contemplation/Action

- ✱ We savour the Word we have heard in this encounter ...
- ✱ We identify what is the soil we must cultivate so that the seed grows ...
- ✱ We outline some pastoral strategies to form BIPM Ministers committed to the service of the Word ...

CHAPTER 7


SENT BY THE COMMUNITY WE PROCLAIM CHRIST IN MISSION



*And at that same moment they set out on the journey
and returned to Jerusalem.*

Lk 24:33

THE ENCOUNTER WITH JESUS IN COMMUNITY

he road from Jerusalem to Emmaus has a profound theological and existential meaning. The disciples are saddened because Jesus has died. The one in whom they had put all their hopes is gone; therefore, it does not make sense to remain in Jerusalem, together with the community of Jesus' disciples. So they decide to leave and go to Emmaus, probably with the intention of going back to what they did before they met Jesus. But on the way, something unexpected happens. Jesus presents himself to them, first in a veiled way, and revealing himself little by little, explaining what the Scriptures said about Him and then in the gesture of the breaking of the bread. Once they recognize him, Jesus disappears, but they realize that something had been happening on the road, their hearts had again burned within them, just as they used to do when they listened to the teachings of Jesus, along with the other disciples and the Twelve. Then, changing their plans, they decide to return to Jerusalem and to the community for Jesus is alive and they must now continue his mission. They return and meet with the other disciples joyfully announcing: *"The Lord has truly been raised and has appeared to Simon!"* (Lk 24:34).

The light of the Risen One allows the disciples to understand that although Jesus is no longer physically present with them, he will continue to be among them in a new way. This new form of presence has a privileged place: the Christian community. In the community gathered around Jesus, one experiences the delight and joy of having seen the Risen One; in it one shares life and faith in the Lord. This is the community of witnesses to the Resurrection, to which Jesus earnestly asks that he remain united in the hope of them being clothed *"with power from on high"* (cf. Lk 24:49), the Holy Spirit, promise of the Father. This is the *"Other Advocate"* (cf. Jn 14:16) that the Father would

send to be always with them (*cf. Jn 14:15-17*) and to remember all that Jesus taught them (*cf. Jn 14:25- 26*), the Holy Spirit who would transform them into authentic witnesses of the Resurrection of the Lord (*cf. Jn 15:26-27*), and guide them to all truth (*cf. Jn 16 :4b-11*).

Belonging to the Christian community is a life-changing experience for believers of all generations; it is where Christ and His Word meet: *“For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I amid them” (Mt 18:20)*. It is there that it is fully present in the gift of the Spirit received in baptism (*cf. Acts 2:1-13*). It is there that the strength is received to proclaim the good news with dedication (*cf. Acts 2:14-36*). The celebration of the Eucharist is the moment par excellence to encounter Christ in the community. In it we praise and bless God through the presence of Christ, Saviour and giver of life, in our midst. It is there that we receive Jesus as the Bread of Life in the Word and in the Eucharistic Bread. It is there that we acknowledge that we are brothers and sisters and children of the same Father. From this experience of encounter and celebration, the Lord sends us out to live what we have celebrated; that is, to bear witness to Jesus and to announce the Good News to our families, our friends, the people we meet in our workplaces and in the various spheres of society.

The Acts of the Apostles narrates how the Church is founded on the proclamation of the Word (*cf. Acts 2:37-41*), whose power urges the formation of communities of believers committed to the mission of evangelization. At this present moment in history, when the whole Christian community is being called to a new evangelization, we need to reclaim the experience of the early Church. In order to encounter Christ, it is necessary to return to the community and strengthen it, because only in the bosom of a community that prays and celebrates the Word, can Jesus do what he did with the Emmaus disciples: *“Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures” (Luke 24:45)*, and only those who understand the Scriptures can be missionary disciples of the Lord, committed to the mission of the Church and to the transformation of the world.

In this context, it follows that an important task of BIPM is to form communities that pray the Word, communities where life is shared in the light

of the Word, since it is there that ministers of BIPM are born. It is important to keep in mind that the Word of God is given to us precisely to build communion, to unite in the truth, and to walk together with Christ towards the Father. It is a Word that is addressed personally to each one, but it is also a Word that builds community, and the Church. Therefore, the best way to approach Sacred Scripture is from the living Tradition of the Church, for “this is essential for the Church to grow over time in the understanding of the truth revealed in the Scriptures”¹¹⁸. The living subject of Sacred Scripture is the People of God, it is the Church¹¹⁹, and hence the importance of reading and experiencing it in the communion of the Church, that is, with all the great witnesses to this Word, with the first Fathers up to the saints of our own day and the Magisterium¹²⁰.

FROM JERUSALEM TO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH

The coming of the Holy Spirit is the moment of a new beginning for the Apostles, powering the proclamation of the Word from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth: “*But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, throughout Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth*” (Acts 1:8). The content of the proclamation is the kerygma: Jesus of Nazareth is the Son of God, the Messiah, the Lord! He who has conquered death and sin, who has given new life to our existence (cf. Acts 5:29-32). This first proclamation brings about the conversion of many people to Jesus Christ, as recorded in the Acts of the Apostles (2:41; 5:14).

In consequence, another task of BIPM is to recapture this first proclamation: the kerygma. The current situation of many men and women who do not know Christ and many others who, knowing Him, do not find meaning in their lives, requires a formation in the faith that begins with a marvellous proclamation of the wonders that God has performed in the history of salvation and the

118 VD 17.

119 Cf. VD 86.

120 Ibid.

wonders he wants to accomplish in our lives. BIPM must present the Word of God as a word of comfort, hope, liberation, a word that gives meaning to life and responds to the deepest yearnings of the human being.

BIPM AND FRATERNAL CHARITY. WORD THAT ILLUMINATES AND CELEBRATES SERVICE

The Gospels teach us that Jesus has a clear preferential option for the poor and dispossessed, for the sick and marginalized, for the oppressed and those despised by society (*cf. Lk 7:22-23; Mt 5:1-12; Mt 9:10-13*). The same happens in the first Christian communities (*Acts 2:42-44; 4:34-35; 11:27-30; 1 Cor 16:1-3; Gal 2:10; Rom 15:25-28*). For this reason, a special concern of the BIPM is to ensure that the light of the Gospel reaches all those on the margins¹²¹. The ministers of BIPM are people committed to the transformation of the world and of society, seeking to engage in concrete actions that lead to the establishment of the Kingdom of God in this world, promoting solidarity, fellowship, the desire for good, truth and justice. In short, it is about promoting the inclusion of the poor and peace and social dialogue.

BIPM will then help to identify, in the reading of Sacred Scripture, the preferential options of the Gospel of Jesus, emphasizing Jesus' bias for the poor and needy (*cf. Mt 25:31-46*).

BIPM, KEY FOR A CHURCH GOING FORTH

The New Testament shows us that the whole life of Jesus is a life in service to the love of the Father for the world. He went through this world doing good to all those he met along the way (*cf. Acts 10:38*). Driven by this love, he ceaselessly reached out to meet the poor, the marginalized, the suffering and those excluded by mainstream of society. Whoever follow him and become

121 Cf. EG 20.

his disciples, will also have to commit themselves to reaching out to others in a double sense: to lose themselves to let themselves be found by Jesus “the way, the truth and the life” (*Jn 14:6*) and to go forth from Jesus to others, putting themselves at their service (*Jn 13:14-15*).

How do we take this double path of mission? By making the necessary pastoral efforts so that the Word of God becomes more and more the heart of the life of the Church and of her mission. This implies strengthening Biblical Pastoral ministry not in juxtaposition with other pastoral ministries, but as Biblical Inspiration of the entire Pastoral Ministry. That is, seeking that the Word of God animates the life of all believers and becomes their nourishment.

The foundation of all authentic and living Christian spirituality is the Word of God proclaimed, welcomed, celebrated and meditated upon in the Church; hence the need to train missionary disciples in attentive, believing and prayerful listening to the Word of God. God, who is a lamp for our feet and a light for our path (*cf. Ps 119,105*), a source that generates in the Church a state of permanent missionary outreach.

Sacred Scripture has a fundamental importance in the life and pastoral work of the Church. This is how Pope Francis puts it:

The study of the sacred Scriptures must be a door opened to every believer. It is essential that the revealed word radically enrich our catechesis and all our efforts to pass on the faith. Evangelization demands familiarity with God’s word, which calls for dioceses, parishes and Catholic associations to provide for a serious, ongoing study of the Bible, while encouraging its prayerful individual and communal reading. We do not blindly seek God, or wait for him to speak to us first, for God has already spoken, and there is nothing further that we need to know, which has not been revealed to us. Let us receive the sublime treasure of the revealed word¹²².

122 EG 175.



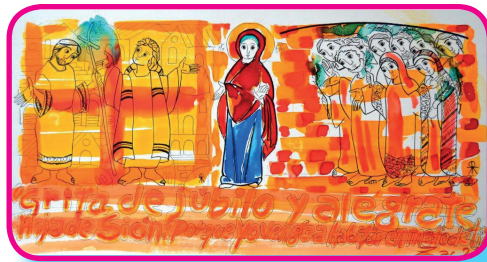
Readings suggested for further Study

Chapter 7

- ✧ *II VATICAN COUNCIL, Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, Dei Verbum (1965), Nos. 11-20. Available at www.vatican.va*
- ✧ *Message to the People of God, XII Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops (2008), Chapter 4. Available at www.vatican.va*
- ✧ *BENEDICT XVI, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation Verbum Domini (2008), Nos. 90-124. Available at www.vatican.va.*
- ✧ *FRANCIS, Apostolic Exhortation Evangelii Gaudium (2013), Nos. 111-134; 160-175. Available at www.vatican.va.*
- ✧ *Silva S., La Palabra de Dios en la Iglesia y en su actividad eclesial, Consejo Episcopal Latinoamericano, Colección Autores No 41 (2013), pp. 311-336.*

LECTIO GUIDE

**“WE ARE THE COMMUNITY THAT
UNDERSTANDS, APPLIES AND PROCLAIMS
THE WORD”**



“Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations”

Mt 28:19

STEP 1 – Reading: Mt 28:16-20

- ✱ What does the text say about the mission Jesus entrusted to the disciples?

STEP 2 - Meditation

- ✱ What role does our community play in the kerygmatic proclamation of the Word? How do I get personally involved in this task?
- ✱ What role does our community play in the ongoing formation of the disciples in hearing the Word? How do I get personally involved in this task?
- ✱ How is the Word illuminating my/our commitment to the establishing of the Kingdom of God?

STEP 3 – Prayer

- ✱ We pray and bless the Lord who has sent us to proclaim his Word to all peoples ...
- ✱ We ask forgiveness for our lack of commitment to the mission that Jesus has entrusted to us ...
- ✱ We ask the Lord to teach us to proclaim his Word to the poor, the afflicted, the forgotten in society ...

STEP 4 - Contemplation/Action

- ✱ We contemplate Jesus who sends us to proclaim His Word ...
- ✱ We ready ourselves to embrace this mission with joy and hope ...
- ✱ We identify some pastoral strategies that, based on BIPM, enable us to become a community in a state of permanent mission, Church going forth ...

APPENDIX 1

THE HISTORICAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE BIBLE AND PASTORAL CARE

FROM THE BIBLICAL APOSTOLATE TO BIBLICAL INSPIRATION OF THE ENTIRE PASTORAL MINISTRY IN THE FRAME WORK OF INTEGRATED PASTORAL MINISTRY

I. Bible and pastoral care: How do they find expression? What is the relationship between them? How has this “relationship” evolved over time?

We present in outline form four paradigms on the relationship between Bible and pastoral care from the beginning of the twentieth century to the present:

- 1) *Biblical apostolate:*** its basic focus is on translations and distribution of Bible texts. The first major step in the Catholic Church to “appropriate” Sacred Scripture as part of its identity and essence. The People of God must have access to the text of the Bible.
- 2) *Biblical movement:*** the “apostolate” begins with the Bible. Introduction of the Bible in liturgical-sacramental settings and in catechesis. It is the moment of the awakening of biblical formation that will be reflected in the later models. At this stage biblical awakening goes hand-in-hand with the liturgical Renewal Movement..

3) **Biblical pastoral ministry:** this model is conceived within the “joint pastoral ministry”. Biblical ministry is given a kind of “special status”, alongside other pastoral ministries: youth, family, children, marriage ... It is a ministry “juxtaposed” with other pastoral ministries. It is the moment of the development of active Biblical circles or groups of biblical reflection in parishes and basic ecclesial communities (BEC).

4) **Biblical Inspiration of the entire Pastoral Ministry (BIPM):** The Bible is envisaged within the “integrated pastoral life”. Scripture “animates”; It is the “life-changing principle” of the pastoral life of the Church. It animates all other pastoral ministries. It is also often referred to simply as “*biblical inspiration*” or “Biblical Inspiration of the entire Pastoral Ministry” or “Biblical Inspiration of the entire Pastoral Ministry” or “*biblical inspiration of pastoral ministry*” or “*biblical dimension of pastoral life*”. BIPM is not an ecclesial group with a “particular charism”, but rather it is a pastoral dimension that should be present, accompanying and providing the basis for all the pastoral activities of the Church. It is horizontal; that is, its role is to animate the different pastoral ministries.

Often the question of the timeframe stages of these four paradigms is asked: from when to up to when and then the next... It is not easy to “*establish dates*” for their evolution. An exact chronology cannot be established, for two reasons:

- a. First, because processes occur differently in different parts of the world; the transitions are different in form and in time in the different individual church communities.
- b. Second, because the earlier models continue to alongside but and incorporated into the later ones. For example, the new paradigm of BIPM cannot dispense with continuing to distribute the text of the Bible as did the earlier model of the “biblical apostolate”.

II. Some dates of important documents and significant events that are relevant to the Biblical Pastoral Ministry and BIPM from the end of the nineteenth century to the present

In this historical overview offered, it is appropriate to keep in mind some events that have marked the relationship between the Bible and pastoral ministry, Bible and Church, Bible and theology, Bible and Magisterium in recent years.

1. Leo XIII, Encyclical *Providentissimus Deus*, 18 November 1893.
2. Leo XIII, Apostolic Letter *Vigilantiae Studii*que, October 30, 1902.
3. Leo XIII created the Pontifical Biblical Commission in October 1902.
4. Pius X founded the Biblical Institute in 1909.
5. Benedict XV, Encyclical *Spiritus Paraclitus*, September 15, 1920.
6. Pius XII, Encyclical *Divino Afflante Spiritu*, 30 September 1943.
7. II Vatican Council, Constitution *Dei Verbum*, November 18, 1965.
8. Paul VI creates the World Catholic Bible Federation on April 16, 1969. In 1990, the name was simplified to the Catholic Biblical Federation (CBF).
9. THE PONTIFICAL BIBLICAL COMMISSION publishes the document *The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church*, September 21, 1993.
10. Publication of: VI PLENARY ASSEMBLY OF THE CATHOLIC BIBLE FEDERATION, *The Word of God: "Blessing for all nations". Biblical pastoral ministry in a plural world*. Final Document, September 12, 2002.
11. Publication of: V GENERAL CONFERENCE OF BISHOPS OF LATIN AMERICAN AND THE CARIBBEAN, Aparecida, June 29, 2007.
12. There takes place in Rome The XII Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops 5-26 October 2008, under the title "The Word of God in the life and mission of the Church".
13. XII Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, Message to the People of God, October 24, 2008.
14. Benedict XVI, Post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Verbum Domini*, September 30, 2010.

APPENDIX 2

PRACTICAL GUIDE TO FORM AN BIPM TEAM IN THE DIOCESE OR PARISH

These Pastoral Guidelines for Biblical Inspiration of the entire Pastoral Ministry seek to be a tool to help form BIPM teams in dioceses and parishes, and to develop BIPM projects with the objective of putting the Word of God at the centre of life and of all pastoral activity. We propose here a summary of the steps to follow to form an BIPM Team.

| | | |
|---|------------------------------|--|
| 0 At the beginning | How to begin? | Invite a group of people from the parish or the diocese to become familiar with the BIPM Pastoral Guidelines |
| 1 Elect persons | Who to invite? | Priests, deacons, religious and laity who are ideally part of some pastoral ministry of the parish or of the diocese and who are committed to knowing the Word of God and to praying with it. |
| 2 Define goals | What to do? | Programme seven meetings, ideally one per week, to study each chapter of this document. All participants will come to the meeting having read the chapter in preparation. |
| 3 Assign roles | Who? | Each meeting will be led by one of the participants guided by the Lectio Divina proposed at the end of each chapter. |
| 4 Leadership | What human resources? | At the end of the meetings those interested in forming this BIPM team will be identified and a person chosen as coordinator who has the endorsement of the competent ecclesial authority (Parish priest or Bishop as the case may be). |
| 5 Team spirit and forward planning | For what purpose? | The team will continue to meet for the purpose, firstly, of consolidating itself as such in the hearing of the Word, and, secondly, to develop a project to implement BIPM in their diocese or parish.may be). |

APPENDIX 3

PRACTICAL GUIDE TO DEVELOP AN BIPM PROJECT IN THE DIOCESE OR PARISH

Once the BIPM team has been formed, it may consider planning a project to start implementing BIPM in their diocese or parish. However, the most important task of the team is to learn to sit at Jesus' feet and listen to his Word (*cf. Lk 10:38-42*). That is why each encounter should begin with *Lectio Divina*, to discern where the Lord wants to lead them to bring the Word to the hearts of the whole community. We propose here a simple example of an BIPM project.

Each chapter of these Guidelines ends with a proposal for a time of *Lectio Divina*, which helps to familiarity with the reality of the team and of the community in relation to the Word. Hence these exercises can guide the team when planning a project.

When planning a BIPM project, it is also important to keep in mind the three dimensions of BAP: interpretation, communion, and evangelization. The project can aim to address one of the dimensions or integrate them all.

| | | |
|---|--------------------------------------|---|
| 0 | Analysis of reality NEEDS | Every project should be structured based on the needs of the community and the tools and possibilities available to the team. To conduct this analysis, we can use a tool called SWOT (see Appendix 4). |
| 1 | Which? DIMENSION | Once the analysis is done, a strategic plan can be developed to respond to the needs of the community. E.g. We find that <i>Lectio Divina</i> is not known in the parish, so we decide to strengthen the BIPM Dimension of Communion. |
| 2 | What? ACTIVITY | The what? aims at defining clearly what activity or strategy we can develop to meet the needs identified. Taking our example, we plan to hold a <i>Lectio Divina</i> workshop for pastoral workers. |

| | | |
|---|------------------------------------|---|
| 3 | What purpose? GOAL | Here should be included the goals of the project. Following our example, the objective would be: To teach and spread the method of <i>Lectio Divina</i> so that our community reads, meditates, prays, contemplates and bears witness to the Word. |
| 4 | How? STEPS TO TAKE | Then it is necessary to define concretely how the project will unfold. In this case, a <i>Lectio Divina</i> workshop for pastoral workers. |
| 5 | Who? AGENT | At this point we will need to define and distribute tasks among the team, to meet the needs of the requirements of the <i>Lectio Divina</i> workshop: invitations, workshop preparation, setting up the venue, refreshments for participants, presenter who will guide the workshop, etc. |
| 6 | For whom? BENEFICIARIES | It is important to define well who will be the actors in the planned activity. In this case, pastoral workers who are part of the various pastoral teams of our community. |
| 7 | When? TIMING | It is very important to sensitively determine what is the best time to carry out the proposed activity. Rather than a multiplicity of encounters or meetings, ideally, we take advantage of meetings that already are scheduled in the annual work plan of the diocese or parish. |
| 8 | How much? COSTS | Every time an activity is planned the costs to be incurred should be addressed. That is, consider how much money will be spent on materials, venue, snacks, equipment Audiovisuals, etc. |
| 9 | EVALUATION | Every project should identify evaluation tools through which the participants can express their degree of satisfaction with the activity, its impact and its usefulness in function of building their faith. Likewise, the team should evaluate itself with respect to the achievement of the objectives. |

APPENDIX 4

A TOOL FOR ANALYSIS OF REALITY: SWOT

(Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats)

This tool facilitates a comprehensive analysis of reality with the goal of identifying:

1. The strengths and weaknesses of the BIPM team. Every team has strengths and weaknesses, which must be known in order to control them. For example, a strength is the fact of having a well-integrated team that is committed to becoming a servant of the Word. One weakness might be that the team does not have the support of biblical scholars and exegetes.
2. The opportunities and threats that come from outside the team and cannot be controlled. For example, an opportunity is the fact that our community has already planned an outreach mission and a *Lectio Divina* workshop could be offered to help prepare the missionaries. A threat, on the other hand, is a situation that can undermine the success of our project and over which we have no control; for example, an excessive number of activities that do not allow space to undertake this project.

| | | |
|------------------|---|---|
| | INTERNAL (Team elements that can be controlled) | EXTERNAL (From outside the team and cannot be controlled) |
| | STRENGTHS | OPPORTUNITIES |
| POSITIVES | | |
| | WEAKNESSES | THREATS |
| NEGATIVES | | |

INDEX OF ABBREVIATIONS

- AD - V CONFERENCE OF THE BISHOPS OF LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN, *APARECIDA Concluding Document* (2007). Available at: <http://www.aecrc.org/documents/Aparecida-Concluding%20Document.pdf>
- DCE-Benedict XVI, Encyclical Letter *Deus Caritas Est* (2005). Available at www.vatican.va
- DGC-CONGREGATION FOR THE CLERGY, *General Directory for Catechesis* (1997). Available at www.vatican.va
- DP - III CONFERENCE OF THE BISHOPS OF LATIN AMERICA AND CARIBBEAN PUEBLA, *Concluding Document* (1979).
- DA - IV CONFERENCE OF THE BISHOPS OF LATIN AMERICA AND CARIBBEAN SANTO DOMINGO, *Concluding Document* (1992).
- DV - II VATICAN COUNCIL, Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, *Dei Verbum* (1965). Available at www.vatican.va
- EA - JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in America* (1999). Available at www.vatican.va
- EG - FRANCIS, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* (2013). Available at www.vatican.va
- LG - II VATICAN COUNCIL, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium* (1964). Available at www.vatican.va
- MF - PAUL VI, Encyclical Letter *Mysterium Fidei*, on the doctrine and worship of the Holy Eucharist (1965). Available at www.vatican.va
- RM - JOHN PAUL II, Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris Mater*, on The Blessed Virgin Mary in the life of the pilgrim Church (1987). Available at www.vatican.va
- SC - II VATICAN COUNCIL, Dogmatic Constitution on the Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (1964). Available at www.vatican.va
- VD - BENEDICT XVI, Apostolic Exhortation *Verbum Domini* (2010). Available at www.vatican.va

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