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Contents

Editorial

Prof. Thomas P. Osborne 2
"Necessity is the mother of invention"

Forum

Kurt Cardinal Koch 3
The Proclamation of a God Who Communicates:
Reflections on the Relationship between Revelation, Word of God and Holy Scripture

Bishop Victor Hugo Palma Paúl 14

The Apostolic Exhortation Verbum Domini and the Episcopal Ministry:
Applications and Perspectives for the Biblical Animation of Pastoral Ministry

Responses 24

Bishop Richard J. Malone, Archbishop John Ha,
Bishop Mathieu Madega Lebouakehan, Archbishop Pierre-Marie Carré

Projects and Experiences

The XIIth Biblical Congress of the Middle East Biblical Federation 26

The Dei Verbum Biblical Pastoral Course 2012 26

The Logos Bible Quiz 27

Federation News

The CBF International Congress on "Sacred Scripture
in the Life and Mission of the Church", Rome, December 1-4, 2010 29

- Introduction (Bishop Vincenzo Paglia) 29

- Ascoltare, Rispondere, Vivere : The Congress Acts in Italian (Ernesto Borghi) 30

CBF Plenary Assembly in Ariccia, June 15-19, 2011 32

Kurt Cardinal Koch, Message to the EPA Delegates 34

Change in BICAM 35

Message to Father Carlos Mesters on the occasion of his 80th birthday 36

Rev. Nicholas Lowe, R.I.P. 36

Biblical Pastoral Publications 37

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Editorial

“Necessity is the mother of invention” (Plato, Republic II, 369c)

For various reasons the “flagship” of the Catholic Biblical Federation, the *Bulletin Dei Verbum*, has not been published since the end of 2008. This quarterly journal served as a platform for the sharing of information, experiences and reflections in the biblical pastoral ministry both among the CBF members and far beyond. It was the icon which revealed the multifaceted visage of the CBF, on the level of individual members, of the subregions and regions as well as of the world wide Federation.

The necessity of the continuation of the BDV, under one form or another, has become increasingly evident over the months. In spite of repeated enquiries and requests for the journal, human and financial resources were lacking for ensuring the planning, realization, printing and mailing of the BDV under the best-known form of the first 89 issues. Nonetheless, the reappearance of this periodical would indeed be a tangible sign of the renewal of the CBF and of the commitment of the General Secretariat to its mission both of networking between the Federation members and subregions and of furthering the development of research and reflection on biblical pastoral ministry.

BDV^{digital} is the inventive attempt to respond to this “necessity” in spite of lacking personnel and funding; it represents further a decisive “yes, we can!” to the continuation of the CBF and of its General Secretariat. BDV^{digital} 2012,1 is a pilot project of an electronic publication which presents a **Forum** of reflection on issues in biblical pastoral ministry, **Projects and Experiences** submitted by individual members and subregions, **Federation News** and information concerning recent **Publications** related in one way or another to biblical pastoral ministry. The first of 2012 presents Cardinal Koch’s contribution to the International CBF Congress held in Rome in December 2010 as well as Bishop Palma Paúl’s contribution during the CBF Extraordinary Plenary Assembly in June 2011, along with reactions from several CBF bishops.

The success of BDV^{digital} depends to a large extent upon extensive collaboration between CBF member organizations and officers. The creation of an editorial board and the collaboration of regional and subregional

correspondents would certainly ensure the common responsibility of the CBF membership for this publication which is called to respond intensively and with creativity to the challenges raised by Pope Benedict XVI in his apostolic exhortation *Verbum Domini* on “Sacred Scripture in the Life and Mission of the Church”.

Biblical pastoral ministry or, as Pope Benedict put it with an expression that was developed over the years in CBF circles, the “animatio biblica totius actionis pastoralis” (the biblical animation or inspiration of all pastoral activity) (VD 73), is the central challenge confronting the CBF. Whether or not the CBF members at large, its boards and officers get the center of its mission back into focus will determine to what extent the Federation will be able to get back on track, and this not only with regard to resuming of the publication of the BDV.



The next months will be decisive. As Noah was called to construct a scaled down version of the cosmos capable of supporting life in a space where violence had to be controlled in order to focus on the essential needs of all living beings, the Executive Committee members are now called to accept seriously the mandate which they received from the Ariccia Plenary Assembly and to work with each other in mutual respect and in common responsibility in making the CBF capable of sharing the Word of God with all women and men in today’s world. This primary necessity requires urgently the creativity and commitment of all of us.

With my best wishes for the CBF and its path ahead!

Prof. Thomas P. Osborne
Acting General Secretary

The Proclamation of a God Who Communicates: Reflections on the Relationship between Revelation, Word of God and Holy Scripture¹

Kurt Cardinal Koch

President of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity



Translated from the German by Leonard J. Maluf, S.S.L., S.T.D.

“The Church has always venerated the divine Scriptures just as she venerates the body of the Lord, since, especially in the sacred liturgy, she unceasingly receives and offers to the faithful the bread of life from the table both of God’s word and of Christ’s body.”² With these words, in its Dogmatic Constitution on divine revelation *Dei Verbum*, the Second Vatican Council brought to expression the fundamental importance of the Word of God in the lives of Christians and of the Church. It is not by accident that this statement is found in the context of the liturgy as the primary locus for the hearing and the proclamation of the Word of God. Because it points not only to the close connection that exists between the proclamation of the Word of God and the sacrificial meal of the Eucharist. The indissoluble bond between Word of God and Body of Christ is attested to by Benedict XVI not least also in the aftermath of the Ordinary World Synod of bishops which took place under his presidency. After the Synod of 2005 was devoted to the Eucharist as “source and highpoint in the life and mission of the Church”³, the next Synod in 2008, in the view of Pope Benedict XVI, should consciously take up the theme “the Word of God in the life and mission of the Church.” The publication of the post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation “*Verbum Domini*” is first of all an occasion for self-critical questioning as to whether and to what extent the fundamental statements of Vatican II on the importance of the Word of God in the Church have been effectively received and translated into concrete living. But the Exhortation likewise invites to a working out of those problems that continue to affect the life of the Church today. In this respect an account of a panorama of relevant questions should be more oriented to the future than to the past so as to be able to address the challenges of the present.

¹ Lecture given at the International Congress in Rome, organized by the Catholic Biblical Federation, on the Apostolic Exhortation on the Word of God: “*La Sacra Scrittura nella vita e nella missione della Chiesa*”, December 2, 2010.

² *Dei Verbum*, n. 21.

³ R. Nadin (ed.), *L'Eucaristia: fonte e culmine della vita e della missione della chiesa. IX Assemblea Generale Ordinaria del Sinodo* (Città del Vaticano 2008); Benedict XVI, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Sacramentum caritatis*.

1. The Word of God as Person, Tradition and Writing

With a topic so fundamental and far-reaching as this, one must naturally first pose the question as to what more precisely is meant by the expression “Word of God”. Even a superficial glance at the Church and the theological landscape of today shows that the question can be answered from two very different and opposing directions. The one side tends to an immediate and simple identification of the Word of God with Holy Scripture, which results very quickly in a certain hypostasizing of the Word and as a consequence – even in the realm of the Catholic Church – a movement toward the reformation principle of *sola scriptura*. The other side takes as its starting point a rather more comprehensive understanding of the Word of God and emphasizes the fact that the Word of God is not in the first place a writing, but rather a personal truth, that is to say that Christ himself is the living Word of God. In this respect the Word of God is in a sense prior to Holy Scripture and is in the first place a person, the incarnate Son of God. In him God has revealed himself; and this revelation has found its authentic witness and mediation in Holy Scripture.

The second understanding is clearly that which underlies the Apostolic Exhortation “*Verbum Domini*”. This is shown above all in the fact that it understands the concept “Word of God” in an analogical sense, namely as “symphony of the Word”⁴, and therefore begins with the designation of the biblically revealed God, who speaks, and then treats of the cosmic dimension of the word, in which all that exists came into being, from there moving on to the fundamental, Christological understanding of the Word of God made flesh who through the working of the Holy Spirit gives himself to the Church, and only within this broad history of salvation context speaks of the presence of the Word of God in the living apostolic tradition and in Holy Scripture. If, accordingly, the revelation of God in his Word is not simply identical with Holy Scripture, the latter is nevertheless viewed as more than simply what is written down. It is rather the case that God's revelation precedes Holy Scripture “and enters it as a kind of precipitant, but is not however simply identical to it”⁵. For God's revelation designates the action of God that shows itself in history; it is a living, personal, social event and can only come to completion when it finds faith acceptance in the persons to whom it is addressed. Because a revelation that would not be accepted can also not become a revelation for anyone, since it belongs to the essence of revelation that it also find a receiving subject, or more precisely “someone who will become aware of it”⁶.

This revelation-theological conception was already worked out by Pope Benedict XVI in his doctoral dissertation on the concept of revelation and the historical theology of Bonaventure, which was of course first published in full in 2009⁷ and concerning which Hansjürgen Verweyen rightly judged that it is of enormous value for an understanding of the theology of the present Pope and that had it been available at an earlier date, the history of theology in the second half of the last century would have taken a very different course⁸. This revelation understanding⁹

⁴ Benedict XVI., *Verbum Domini*, n. 7.

⁵ J. Cardinal Ratzinger, *Aus meinem Leben. Erinnerungen* (Stuttgart 1998) 84.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ J. Ratzinger, *Die Geschichtstheologie des heiligen Bonaventura* (München 1955). The finally fully published doctoral dissertation is now found in the second volume of the „Gesammelten Schriften“ of Joseph Ratzinger: *Offenbarungs-verständnis und Geschichtstheologie Bonaventuras* (Freiburg i. Br. 2009) 53-659. Cf. on this M. Schlosser / F. -X. Heibl (eds.), *Gegenwart der Offenbarung. Zu den Bonaventura-Forschungen Joseph Ratzingers* = Ratzinger-Studien. Band 2 (Regensburg 2010).

⁸ H. Verweyen, *Ein unbekannter Ratzinger. Die Habilitationsschrift von 1955 als Schlüssel zu seiner Theologie* (Regensburg 2010).

⁹ Cf. also J. Ratzinger, *Offenbarung – Schrift – Überlieferung. Ein Text des heiligen Bonaventura und seine Bedeutung für die gegenwärtige Theologie*, in *Trierer Theologische Zeitschrift* 67 (1958) 13-27; also, *J. Ratzinger – Benedikt XVI., Wort Gottes. Schrift – Tradition – Amt*. Edited by P. Hünemann / Th. Söding

which would have managed to break through many of the tight spots into which revelation thinking fell in the last century and which Joseph Ratzinger presented at the beginning of the Council in the form of a talk he gave at the time to the German-speaking bishops takes as its starting point the idea that revelation is always something more than its material principle, Holy Scripture, “that it is a life-force which inhabits the Church and only thus brings the Scriptures to life and allows their hidden depths to come to light”¹⁰ And over against the traditional view of Scripture and Tradition as the two-fold source of revelation, Joseph Ratzinger accentuates the idea of revelation as the single source which has priority with respect to both Scripture and Tradition, which are but historical mediations of this one revelation: revelation, understood as “communication and self-disclosure of God”, is “the unus fons, from which the two rivulets of scripture and tradition flow forth”¹¹. There can be no doubt that these fundamental insights of Joseph Ratzinger gained far-reaching entrance into the Constitution on Divine Revelation that ultimately emerged from Vatican II; and indeed the idea comes to expression in its very first sentence: “Dei verbum religiose audiens et fidenter proclamans”, which implies that God's revelation has a concrete directionality, its goal being the reception-ready hearing of the Word of God.

The consequences that result from this revelation understanding cannot be underestimated. In the present context however we must be content to quickly name two perspectives. The emphasis on the special dignity of the Word of God as a person represents first of all an important direction signal in inter-religious dialogue. In the overall trend of today, where the different religions are treated as equally valid ways for human beings to relate to God, the tendency is also to speak frankly of the Holy Scriptures of humanity. To be sure there is a lot of truth in this way of speaking. But of course what is in danger of being forgotten here is the fact that Christianity is not – as is the case for example with Judaism and in a slightly different way with Islam – a religion of the book; it is rather an internal relationship of friendship with Jesus Christ as the living Word of God, without whom ultimately even the paper of Holy Scripture would remain what paper is: something on which anything at all can be written. What is specific about Christianity can, with the Catholic New Testament scholar Thomas Söding, be stated in condensed form in the central formula: “Christianity has a Holy Scripture but is not a religion of the book. At the heart of Christianity stands the man: Jesus of Nazareth. Through him what is human is linked with the divine and God with man.”¹²

The analogous use of the expression “Word of God” in the second place brings to expression the fundamental difference in ecclesiology that remains till today between the Catholic Church and the Churches that stem from the Reformation: reformation theology defines the Church exclusively in terms of the “pure et recte” proclaimed word of God and administration of the sacraments in accordance with the Gospel, and it understands the word of God as a reality that is self-revelatory and that stands independently over against the Church and hence as an independent corrective even of ecclesiastical office. In contrast to this far-reaching hypostatization of the Word of God the Catholic Church names office itself as a third criterion of the Church's essence: “it knows no quasi-hypostatic word that would stand over against the

(Freiburg i. Br. 2005).

¹⁰ The text of the lecture was first made available in J. Wicks, “Six texts by Prof. Joseph Ratzinger as *peritus* before and during Vatican Council II”, in *Gregorianum* 89 (2008) 233-311. The pertinent text is found on pages 269-285. Cf. the German translation: *Bemerkungen zum Schema “de fontibus revelationis”*, in: R. Vorderholzer – Ch. Schaller – F. –X. Heibl (eds.), *Mitteilungen des Institut Papst Benedikt XVI.* Band 2 (Regensburg 2009) 36-48, cit. 41.

¹¹ Ibid. 37.

¹² Th. Söding, „Gotteswort durch Menschenwort. Das Buch der Bücher und das Leben der Menschen“, in: F. –H. Kronawitter / M. Langer (eds.), *Von Gott und der Welt. Ein theologisches Lesebuch* (Regensburg 2008) 212-223, cit. 219.

Church; rather the Word lives in the Church, just as the Church lives from the Word – a connection of mutual dependence and relationship.”¹³

2. Holy Scripture in the Life-Space of the Church

This connection has to be looked at more closely, in that the question first of all arises as to who is the real addressee of the Word of God. Since the individual Christian does not live from his own private belief but rather with a faith that he or she shares with the whole Church, and since the “I” of the Credo is the Church, it is the People of God that is the real addressee of God's revelation and its authentic articulation in Holy Scripture. This is shown by the fundamental fact that already in its origin Holy Scripture is an expression of the faith of the Church and Holy Scripture is a book of the Church that emerged from the tradition of the Church and that is handed on through her.

Without the believing subject that is the Church one could not speak of “Holy Scripture” at all. Without the Church the Bible would be nothing more than an historical collection of writings whose origin spans an entire millennium. From this collection of literature the Bible first and only came into being as “a book”, and indeed as “Holy Scripture” with its two-in-one unity of Old and New Testament through the agency of the People of God as they journey in history. Holy Scripture presents itself as a single book above all because it emerged wholly from the ground of the one People of God and because as a result the author of the Bible is the People of God itself, namely in the first place Israel and then the Church, as the New Testament scholar Gerhard Lohfink rightly emphasizes: “Holy Scripture is not a package of 73 books, belatedly compressed into one; rather it grew the way a tree grows. At the end of the process once again brand new branches were grafted onto this tree: the New Testament. But these branches too take their nourishment from the sap of the one tree and are supported by its trunk.”¹⁴

In light of this close connection between Holy Scripture and Church the question of the biblical canon also requires new treatment.¹⁵ Ernst Käsemann famously put forward the thesis that the New Testament canon is the foundation not of the unity of the Church but of the variety of its books and their possible interpretations, and thereby also of the diversity of confessions.¹⁶ This disclosure only makes sense of course if one treats the New Testament canon as an isolated phenomenon, existing in and for itself. But this is a truncated question, formulated in the perspective of the Reformation and not from the perspective of the canon itself. For the canon neither fell from heaven nor did it exist already prior to the Church; rather it arose within the Church: “together with the conclusion that the formation of the canon was consciously intended to serve the unity of the Church's teaching over against the diversity and contradictions of the Hellenistic philosophies, all of this shows that the formation of the canon was a self-conscious creation of the emerging Church.”¹⁷ In this respect the canon is not the foundation of the unity of the Church, and still less of the diversity of the confessions; it is rather the unity of the Church that is the foundation of the canon as a unity. For it was with intense wrestling and extraordinary effort that the emerging Church found in the different books that make up the Bible the authentic expression and measure of its own faith, such that without the faith of the emerging Church there could not have been a canon.

¹³ J. Ratzinger, „Das geistliche Amt und die Einheit der Kirche“, in: *ibid*, *Das neue Volk Gottes. Entwürfe zur Ekklesiologie* (Düsseldorf 1969) 105-129, cit. 106.

¹⁴ G. Lohfink, *Bibel Ja – Kirche nein? Kriterien richtiger Bibelauslegung* (Bad Tölz 2004) 117.

¹⁵ Th. Söding, *Einheit der Heiligen Schrift? Zur Theologie des biblischen Kanons* (Freiburg i. Br. 2005).

¹⁶ E. Käsemann, „Begründet der neutestamentliche Kanon die Einheit der Kirche?“ In *ibid.*, *Exegetische Versuche und Besinnungen 1* (Göttingen 1960) 214-223.

¹⁷ I. Frank, *Der Sinn der Kanonbildung* (Freiburg i. Br. 1971) 204.

Holy Scripture, in the sense of the bringing together of diverse writings, is the work of ecclesiastical tradition, in which the seat of the Bishop of Rome played a constitutive role. In this sense it can also be shown historically that recognition by Rome as “the criterion of right apostolic faith” is older “than the canon of the New Testament as ‘Scripture’”¹⁸. For this reason the Catholic ecumenical theologian Heinz Schütte diagnosed the Protestant *sola scriptura* principle of Scripture as the core ecumenical problem, since in fact the theory relies on an early Church decision and yet theoretically it intends to exclude such a decision.¹⁹ This paradox brings to light the fact that the theme of the Church as creator, tradent and exegete of the biblical canon cannot be circumnavigated, as Reformation theology and to a certain extent even Catholic exegesis think it is possible to do.

After what has been said above, it will be necessary to describe the relationship between Holy Scripture and the Church as follows: on the one hand, Scripture is Holy Scripture not apart from, and not as over against the Church, but only in her; on the other hand, the Church, in order to remain Church, must hold onto Holy Scripture as a dimension toward which she must orientate herself, and that the Church does not stand over the Word of God but is at its command, as the Dogmatic Constitution explicitly emphasizes²⁰. To this extent it is precisely by thinking through the relationship between Holy Scripture and the Church that its most profound essence comes to expression, that she “does not belong to herself, but rather has what is most her own precisely in that which does not belong to her, but which she has received”²¹.

Holy Scripture is and remains a living book when it is with its People as the subject that receives and appropriates it; and conversely this People of God cannot exist at all without Holy Scripture, because it has in Scripture the very foundation of its life, its calling and its identity. It follows naturally from this that the vital sphere in which the People of God encounters the Word of God in Holy Scripture is in a special way that of the Church’s worship. That the liturgy is the privileged place in which the Word of God that builds the Church resounds is a point that Benedict XVI brings out by beginning the second part of his Apostolic Exhortation “*Verbum Domini*” with the treatment of the Word of God in the sacred liturgy: “Every liturgical action is by its very nature steeped in sacred Scripture.”²²

3. The Word of God and further constitutive elements of the Church

The question regarding the relationship between the Church and Holy Scripture which constitutes the guideline of the Pontifical Exhortation on the Word of God is not only disputed today in the Catholic Church, but also constitutes the inner core of the ecumenical problem. The controversial question is that regarding the relationship between the Word of God and officially commissioned witnesses of this word in the faith community of the Church. In this sense at his ecumenical meeting with representatives of other Christian churches during his trip to Germany in September of 2005 Pope Benedict XVI stressed that the ecclesiological question that is pending in the realm of ecumenism is that of the “manner of presence of the Word of God in the world”, or more precisely that of the interdependence of “word and witness and rule of faith” and that one should treat the ecclesiological question likewise as a question of God’s word, its sovereignty and its humility “in which the Lord has also entrusted the word to witnesses and granted the authority to interpret it, which must of course always be measured against the

¹⁸ J. Kardinal Ratzinger, *Zur Gemeinschaft gerufen. Kirche heute verstehen* (Freiburg i. Br. 1991) 65.

¹⁹ H. Schütte, *Protestantismus heute. Ökumenische Orientierung* (Paderborn 2004) 70.

²⁰ *Dei Verbum*, n. 10. Cf. F. –J. Orttemper / F. Schuller (eds.), *Berufen, das Wort Gottes zu verkündigen* (Stuttgart 2008) 34-47).

²¹ J. Ratzinger, „Kommentar zu These VI“, in: International Theological Commission, *Die Einheit des Glaubens und der theologische Pluralismus* (Einsiedeln 1973) 36-42, cit. 41.

²² Benedict XVI., *Verbum Domini*, n. 52.

regula fidei and the gravity of the Word itself”²³. This perspective will of course only be able to be understood if one treats the question against the background of those four fundamental operations with which the Church originated and that belong to its enduring essential characteristics.

a) The first operation is, as already discussed, the creation of the *canon* of Holy Scripture, which around the end of the second century had already arrived at a certain conclusion, but which extended out well into the following centuries as well. The fact that the literature which we today refer to as the New Testament was selected from a multiplicity of attested writings that were then in circulation and was then put together with the Greek canon of the Jewish Bible to form the “Old Testament” and the “New Testament”, which is then all together seen as constituting “Holy Scripture” shows not only that the definition of the biblical canon is a work of the early Church, but also that the constitution of the biblical canon and the constitution of the hierarchy of the early Church are fundamentally two sides of the same operation.

b) In the selection of those writings, which were ultimately acknowledged by the Church as Holy Scripture, the early Church used a measure which she referred to as the *regula fidei*. This she continually brought up to date in the various conciliar definitions, in which the wrestling of the early Church over the determination of what is Christian found binding expression. The fundamental faith confessions or creeds of the whole of Christendom constitute therefore the second anchor of the early Church.

c) The reading of Holy Scripture and the Creed were in the early Church in the first place acts of worship of the community assembled around the risen Lord. Accordingly, the early Church, in the third place, created the fundamental forms of Christian worship, which must be regarded as a permanent basis and binding reference point for any liturgical renewal. The earliest description of the *Liturgy of the Eucharist*, namely that by Justin the Martyr in the middle of the second century, already contains the essential elements that have remained the same in all the great liturgical families of rites and that are still known to us today.

d) The Word of God, which is preached in the worship of the Church, had in the view of the early Church its principal form in the presence of the word in witness. Since Word and witness belong together, that is to say since not only does witness live for the Word of God and from it, but even more so the Word lives through the witnesses, the early Church in the fourth place came to have the conviction of apostolic succession in the office of the Bishop. That the “development, theological foundation and institutional confirmation of the office of bishop” must be treated as “one of the most important results of post-apostolic development”²⁴ is eloquently attested to by the letter of Clement of Rome to the Corinthians. This is a community letter which was drafted in the year 96, and indeed in Rome, the soon-to-be leading community in the West, and was addressed to the community in Corinth, one of the oldest of the Pauline communities, where this document was joyously received. This letter, which received “almost canonical rank” in the Church in the early centuries and which was regularly read in the community of Corinth in the setting of worship²⁵, documents the astounding fact that already a short time after the death of the apostles and long before the end of the canon-formation process in the whole Church – in the West as well as in East – there was only yet an arrangement of ecclesiastical offices: Each community had a bishop and, to the extent necessary, and each according to its size, a college of priests and deacons.

²³ Benedict XVI, *L'incontro con i rappresenatanti di altre Chiese e Comunità ecclesiali*, in: *Insegnamenti di Benedetto XVI I* 2005 (Città del Vaticano 2006) 439-444.

²⁴ E. Dassmann, *Ämter und Dienste in den frühchristlichen Gemeinden* (Bonn 1994) 230.

²⁵ Clement of Rome, *Epistola ad Corinthios*, translation and introduction by G. Schneider = *Fontes christiani* 13 (Freiburg i. Br. 1991), 34.

4. The Word of God in Scripture, Tradition, and Magisterium

Canon of Holy Scripture, creed, fundamental form of Eucharistic worship and apostolic succession in the office of bishop are the four fundamental conditions of the early Church²⁶, which shows that one can not extract Holy Scripture from the total complex of the early Church's faith life, but that it is rather to be interpreted within this context. Conversely, we should not attempt to silence the fact that the ecclesiastical magisterium has in the past unduly extended the realm of faith certainties and thereby damaged its credibility.²⁷ From this history the lesson should be learned that the magisterium today must allow broad room to the scientific question in terms of the variety and scope of its interpretation of historical statements. But on the other hand this cannot mean that the magisterium no longer has anything at all to say with respect to scriptural interpretation, especially in those cases where interpretation is directed against the Church and her Credo. The magisterium cannot, however, in these cases act in the sense of enunciating a formal principle, but only in the sense of adhesion to the Creed of the Church in terms of its contents.

An analogous observation applies for the relationship between Holy Scripture and ecclesiastical tradition, or between exegesis of Holy Scripture and its interpretation in the history of its historical impact (Wirkungsgeschichte). In this connection, exegesis could learn much from the dialogue between Catholics and Jews. Because for the Jews the Hebrew Bible is not a "closed, self-contained book"; rather it is very much alive inasmuch as the Bible is read in the light of the Talmud and above all of midrash, which not only complements the Hebrew Bible, but also enriches it with totally new narrative materials.²⁸ As in Judaism so also in Christianity Scripture and Tradition are treated in a much looser way than they are for the most part today, as much more closely linked with each other, as article 9 of the Constitution on divine revelation emphasized: "...there exists a close connection and communication between sacred tradition and Sacred Scripture."

Accordingly, Holy Scripture cannot be considered apart from tradition, and tradition can also not be thought of apart from the Church and the Church apart from the other two. Thus, not least on the basis of the results of historical and exegetical research on Scripture and tradition, a strict opposition between Scripture and Church, as it is represented within the reformed tradition, is just as much excluded in a Catholic viewpoint as is the denial on principle of a judicial function of Holy Scripture in the Church. The Dogmatic Constitution on divine revelation relies rather on the presupposition of a multi-dimensional interplay between Scripture, Tradition and Church, so that one can accept the judgment of Henri de Lubac: "Nothing more contradicts the spirit of this Constitution than the idea of a kind of hostile competition between Scripture and Tradition, as though one would take away from the one what one gave to the other. Never before has a conciliar text so well laid out the tradition principle in its entire scope and complexity; never before was so much space given to Holy Scripture."²⁹ One could render a similarly positive judgment on the Apostolic Exhortation of Benedict XVI on the Word of God.

²⁶ Cf. J. Ratzinger, „Die Bedeutung der Väter für die gegenwärtige Theologie“, in *Theologische Quartalschrift* 148 (1968) 257-282, esp. 277-281.

²⁷ Cf. J. Cardinal Ratzinger, „Kirchliches Lehramt und Exegese. Reflexionen aus Anlass des 100-jährigen Bestehens der Päpstlichen Bibelkommission“, in: *Communio. Internationale katholische Zeitschrift* 32 (2003) 522-529.

²⁸ E. L. Ehrlich, „Altes Testament oder Hebräische Bibel? Haben Christen und Juden eine gemeinsame Heilige Schrift?“, in: „Was uns trennt, ist die Geschichte“. Ernst Ludwig Ehrlich – Vermittler zwischen Juden und Christen, eds. Von H. Heinz / H. H. Henrix (Munich 2008) 146-153, cit. 147.

²⁹ H. de Lubac, *Die göttliche Offenbarung. Kommentar zum Vorwort und zum Ersten Kapitel der Dogmatischen Konstitution „Dei Verbum“ des Zweiten Vatikanischen Konzils* (Einsiedeln 2001) 251.

5. Historical Exegesis and Interpretation in the Spirit of the Church

All of this opens up the perspective on those two fundamental tensions by which the life of the Church with the Word of God is marked and which appear already in the Constitution on divine revelation. The first tension becomes evident in article 12, where on the one hand the whole demand for and the fundamental significance of the historical-critical method of Scriptural interpretation as an indispensable part of exegetical endeavors is laid out in a meaningful way, and in which on the other hand the proper theological dimension of Scriptural interpretation is recalled with the directive that Holy Scripture “must be read and interpreted in the same spirit in which it was written”. This means concretely that the correct ascertainment of the meaning of Holy Scripture requires that “no less serious attention must be given to the content and unity of the whole of Scripture...The living tradition of the whole Church must be taken into account along with the harmony which exists between elements of the faith (the *analogia fidei*)”. In this way as it were the two-fold character of Holy Scripture is taken into account, that it is God’s word, but that it is spoken in and through the human word, and that at the same time it is more than human word because in it is contained God’s living word to human beings.

But how do the two go together? Whereas historical-critical exegesis on the basis of its hermeneutical rules inquires about the intention of the biblical authors, and also about the real origin and the earliest stage of a text, and thereby must also insist on the foreignness of the historical texts, the interpretation of Holy Scripture in the Spirit in which it was written treats Scripture as a whole as part of the giant wrestling of God with humanity and in the human search for God, and indeed in the original unity of Old and New Testaments more precisely as the “library of the People of the God, Israel as well as the Church”³⁰

Closely connected with this is the second difference: while in the historical-critical interpretation of Scripture the individual exegete inquires after the authentic meaning of a biblical text and brings his efforts into critical correlation with the consensus of exegetes, in the interpretation of Holy Scripture in the Spirit in which it was written it is above all the ecclesial community which interprets Holy Scripture and does so indeed in the life context of the whole tradition of the Church, which is certainly more than Holy Scripture, but which relates to it as to its vital center, since in its true essence Holy Scripture is itself tradition. The task of the exegete is thus defined by the Constitution on divine revelation as being that of working “toward a better understanding and explanation of the meaning of Sacred Scripture, so that through preparatory study the judgment of the Church may mature.”³¹

In spite of this fundamental difference, the two interpretive efforts centered on Holy Scripture belong together in permanent tension. This is the heart of the concern of the Constitution on divine revelation, but this necessity also shows itself in an exemplary way in the life’s journey and work of Heinrich Schlier.³² Pope Benedict XVI once said of Schlier who converted to Catholicism that in his conversion he held on to “the best of the Protestant heritage” and “did not simply retreat from *Sola scriptura*”; rather, his conversion was grounded in the fact that “he found in the *Sola scriptura* principle itself the call to the realm of the living Church, to its authority and to its continuity as the presupposition for the ‘development of the apostolic

³⁰ Thomas Söding, *op. cit.* (note 12) 216.

³¹ *Dei Verbum*, n. 12.

³² A similar observation could be made with reference to Cardinal John H. Newman, who converted from Anglicanism to Catholicism and about whom Cardinal Ratzinger said: he became “a convert as a man of conscience”, but this journey of conscience was “anything but a way of self-asserting subjectivity”; rather it was a “way of obedience to objective truth” and presupposed the “overcoming of the subjective-evangelical position in favor of a conception of Christianity based on the objectivity of dogma”. Cf. Cardinal J. Ratzinger, “Newman belongs to the great teachers of the Church”, in: *Benedict XVI and Cardinal Newman*, edited by P. Jennings (Oxford 2005) 33-36.

legacy”.³³ Since Schlier as a student of the Evangelical exegete Rudolf Bultmann had experienced the limits of the latter’s exegesis, it was for him, as he himself revealed in his “brief account” of his conversion, “a truly Protestant path” that led him to the Catholic Church, more precisely a path “which precisely in the Lutheran confessional writings is foreseen, if not of course expected”. What pointed him in the last analysis toward the Catholic Church was “the New Testament, as an unbiased historical reading presented it”. Schlier was unable to see in historical interpretation any contradiction to the interpretation of Holy Scripture “in the Spirit of the Church”: “For the Spirit of Church also includes unbiased historical interpretation and is also here not a spirit of slavery unto fear, but for sonship. Historical scholarship that is really open to the historical phenomena is after all also a way of illuminating the truth. So it too can find the Church and be a way to it.”³⁴

6. Scientific Scriptural Interpretation and *lectio divina*

The second fundamental tension hereby already comes into view, one that is closely connected with the first and likewise has a place in article 12 of the Constitution on divine revelation. In this article on the one side the necessity of the historical critical method and its essential elements are briefly described, confirmed and derived from the fact that the salvation history of God with human beings attested to in Holy Scripture is really history and not mythology and should therefore be treated with the methods of a serious historical science: “since God speaks in Sacred Scripture through men in human fashion, the interpreter of Sacred Scripture, in order to see clearly what God wanted to communicate to us, should carefully investigate what meaning the sacred writers really intended, and what God wanted to manifest by means of their words.”³⁵

But on the other side the Constitution on divine revelation also demands a theological reading of Scripture, one that takes as its starting point the unity of the whole of Scripture. This means concretely that each biblical text must be read in its relation to the whole of Holy Scripture, even going back to the original unity of Old and New Testament which must be stressed in opposition to Marcionite tendencies that continuously flare up, and this not only in the general faith consciousness but also in theological reflection. With this, the method many today tend to refer to as “canonical exegesis” comes into focus. The core insight of this method is however found already in Johann Sebastian Drey, the founder of the Catholic Tübingen School in the 19th century: “Interpretation always takes place to be sure first at the level of an individual passage; its goal however is the understanding of the whole... Such a whole is first of all the individual passage of a book, then the book itself, beyond this the entire collection of the writings of a given biblical author, but finally the entire Bible itself as canon. It is clear how the canon itself enters here as an important idea.”³⁶

Where both methodological approaches to the reading of Holy Scripture complement each other and mutually challenge each other the richness of the biblical message is in no way impaired but rather acquires a new profile. On the other hand, where the two methodologies no longer feed each other, a deeper and deeper trench is dug between the historical critical and the theological interpretation of Scripture, which presents a great pastoral problem which shows itself not only in the frequently bemoaned helplessness experienced in homily preparation, but also in the difficulty of an unbiased approach to *lectio divina* in the sense of a spiritual reading of Scripture.

³³ J. Cardinal Ratzinger, Foreword, in: H. Schlier, *Der Geist und die Kirche. Exegetische Aufsätze und Vorträge*. Eds. V. Kubina and K. Lehmann (Freiburg i. Br. 1980) VII-X, cit. IX.

³⁴ H. Schlier, „Kurze Rechenschaft“, in: *ibid.*, *Der Geist und die Kirche. Exegetische Aufsätze und Vorträge*. Eds. V. Kubina and K. Lehmann (Freiburg i. Br. 1980) 270-289, cit. 274-275.

³⁵ *Dei Verbum*, n. 12.

³⁶ J. S. Drey, „Kurze Einleitung in das Studium der Theologie mit Rücksicht auf den wissenschaftlichen Standpunkt und das katholische System 1819“, § 160, in: M. Kessler und M. Seckler (eds.), *Theologie, Kirche, Katholizismus. Beiträge zur Programmatik der Katholischen Tübinger Schule* (Tübingen 2003) 261.

For this reason it can hardly come as a surprise that the demand to bring closer together again the two styles of interpretation runs like a leitmotif through the Apostolic Exhortation of Benedict XVI on the Word of God. For it is of fundamental importance for the life and mission of the Church that the dangerous dualism between exegesis and theology be overcome and that in this way both kinds of scriptural interpretation demanded by the Constitution on divine revelation be taken seriously: "Where exegesis is not theology Holy Scripture cannot be the soul of theology and vice versa, where theology is not essentially the interpretation of Scripture in the Church, theology no longer has a foundation."³⁷

This problem has to be looked at more closely at the ground level. It lies at the very foundation of historical-critical exegesis that it treats Holy Scripture as a book of the past and accordingly deals with past events and meanings. God's word appears then as primarily a word of the past that must be interpreted historically. This work is indispensable and necessary for the understanding of Holy Scripture. For it must be an earnestly felt concern of the believing person to pay close heed to what the text actually says so as to be able to understand it as such. But when this becomes "absolutized" as the sole approach to Holy Scripture, the problem arises that Pope Benedict XVI already formulated in an early essay of his as follows: "To simply encase the word in the past means to deny the Bible as Bible. In point of fact an interpretation of this kind that is simply historical, that is focused simply on the past is to follow a line of logic that leads to the denial of canon and to that extent to contesting the Bible as Bible."³⁸

To accept the canon as canon means then being able to read the word of God beyond its historical moment and to acknowledge the people of God as the real author at work within the various authors. To the extent that we do this we are able to approach God's word not only as one that has been spoken in the past, but as a word that God through men of past times has gifted to people of all times as a word for the present. The Church Fathers were careful therefore to treat Holy Scripture like a spiritual Eden in which man could walk with God and marvel at the beauty and harmony of his plan of salvation. *Lectio divina* invites us to this kind of reading. In it Christians expose themselves in an immediate way to the acceptance and claim of God present in the word of Holy Scripture, they meet the word of God himself in the words of Holy Scripture and are thereby doing theology in the most elementary sense. For with all the necessary cognitive striving the encounter with Holy Scripture is always also a spiritual event³⁹ and therefore also a true encounter with the "word of the living God"⁴⁰.

7. Pastoral Pre-eminence of the Word of God

Theology is accordingly only in its element when it is not merely conveying intellectual knowledge, but an understanding faith itself, "such that faith is understanding and understanding is faith".⁴¹ This bridge-work function between reason and faith is something that theology in the pastoral situation of today should perceive with particular seriousness – a time in which many baptized persons have become more and more estranged not only from the faith language of the Church but also from the world of the Bible. The Catholic New Testament scholar Walter Kirchschräger has rightly diagnosed the problem: "that in spite of the numerous efforts that have been undertaken the general understanding of the Bible by believers has not been

³⁷ Benedict XVI., „Reflexionen zur Bibelexegese. Intervention an der Bischofssynode am 14. Oktober 2009“, cited in *Verbum Domini*, n. 35.

³⁸ J. Cardinal Ratzinger, „Perspektiven der Priesterausbildung heute“, in *ibid.*, among others, *Unser Auftrag. Besinnung auf den priesterlichen Dienst* (Würzburg 1990) 11-38. cit. 28.

³⁹ B. Jeggle-Merz, „...er soll darin lessen sein Leben lang“ (Dtn 17, 19). *Lectio divina* und Verkündigung des Wortes im Gottesdienst“, in: *Bibel und Liturgie* 80 (2007) 251-259.

⁴⁰ W. Kirchschräger, „'Wort des lebendigen Gottes'. Wer spricht in der Bibel?“, in: W. Kirchschräger (ed.), *Christlicher Glaube – überholt* (Zürich 1993) 47-65.

⁴¹ Benedetto XVI., „Ai Vescovi della Svizzera“, in: *Insegnamenti di Benedetto XVI* II 2006 (Città del Vaticano 2007). 5760583.

developed to the extent that was hoped for at the time of the Council".⁴² Moreover, the popularizing of the results of historical-critical exegesis has left many believers with the impression that only the experts can really understand Holy Scripture.

In this situation which has become widespread at the pastoral level the work of biblical pastoral ministry is not optional but obligatory. This requires not only the development of a sustainable theology of the Word of God, such as the retired bishop of Würzburg Paul-Werner Scheele has recently provided⁴³, but also the exploration of new approaches to the word of God in Holy Scripture that comes to people not only as a word from the past but also and above all as a word for the present, a word in which Christ himself speaks to people even today. Because he himself is the living word of God and he as it were interprets himself in the words of Holy Scripture. The question as to how the Holy Scripture is to be read and the Christian faith itself are to this extent indissolubly linked, as Saint Jerome, the great exegete in the era of the Church fathers brought to expression in the pregnant formula: "one who is ignorant of Scripture, knows neither the power of God nor his wisdom. Ignorance of Scripture is ignorance of Christ."⁴⁴

In order to know Christ, one must spend time with Holy Scripture. And conversely, without a personal encounter with Christ the paper of Scripture remains profane and open to any distortion. It begins to speak only when one is living in a relationship of friendship with Christ in the faith community of the Church. Listening to the Word of God also gives us enormous energy for furthering the ecumenical reunion of Christians. Since the great ecclesial separation of the 16th century in the West began with a controversial reading of the Word of God, above all with reference to the relationship between Holy Scripture and ecclesiastical tradition and since "in a certain sense it reached even into the Bible itself"⁴⁵, healing this rift will be made possible above all by way of a common reading of Holy Scripture, which offers itself as a welcome starting point "for learning how to cope with the different confessional approaches to the Bible"⁴⁶.

Listening to the Word of God together is however an indispensable way to open the access to Holy Scripture for other people as well. The fact is that people are ultimately going to find in Holy Scripture what they look for in it: if they look for nothing in it they will find nothing. If they look in it only for historical facts they will find only the facts of history. If they look for their God in Scripture they will find him there – and be able to bring him to others. It is in this that the fundamental mission of ecclesiastical office consists. It is therefore a beautiful coincidence that with the Apostolic Exhortation of Benedict XVI on the Word of God the 12th volume of the *Gesammelten Schriften* of Joseph Ratzinger was simultaneously able to be published, in which under the title "announcer of the Word and servant of your joy" (*Künder des Wortes und Diener eurer Freude*) all of his contributions to the theology and spirituality of the sacrament of priestly ordination are collected.

In a text from the year 1983 Joseph Ratzinger, who should have the last word on the Word of God, offers the following advice to all those who are deep into the study of exegesis and who reflect on every aspect of God's word: "in order for its radiance to be truly "reflected", that is, given back fully kindled, reflection on the historical genesis of the word (valuable as this may be) is not enough; it must have reached that Marian depth of reflection which Luke describes when he says that Mary kept all these words, pondering them in her heart (Lk 2:19): the word must make its way into the heart, it must be retained and it must lead to an understanding in which the individual is seen from the perspective of the whole and the whole in the individual."⁴⁷

⁴² W. Kirchschräger, *Das Wort Gottes feiern* (Manuscript 2008) 10.

⁴³ P. –W. Scheele, *Wort des Lebens. Eine Theologie des Wortes* (Würzburg 2007).

⁴⁴ Jerome, Prologue to the Isaiah commentary, in: PL 24, 17.

⁴⁵ J. Ratzinger, *Die erste Sitzungsperiode des Zweiten Vatikanischen Konzils. Ein Rückblick* (Köln 1963) 60.

⁴⁶ W. Kardinal Kasper, *Wegweiser Ökumene und Spiritualität* (Freiburg i. Br. 2007) 24.

⁴⁷ J. Ratzinger, "Aufbauen zu einem geistigen Haus'. Eine Betrachtung zu 1 Petr 2, 5", in: J. Ratzinger, *Gesammelte Schriften*. Band 12: *Künder des Wortes und Diener eurer Freude. Theologie und Spiritualität des Weihsakramentes* (Freiburg i. Br. 2010) 422-431, cit. 428.

The Apostolic Exhortation *Verbum Domini* and the Episcopal Ministry: Applications and Perspectives for the Biblical Animation of Pastoral Ministry

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Source: ServFoto OssRom

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Introduction: The Episcopal Vocation in the Service of the Word

The Blessed John Paul II stressed in the post-synod Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores gregis* the perennial liturgical symbolism indicated by the Vatican II Council, which in the Roman Rite of the Episcopal Ordination expresses the Bishop's specific mission to teach: the gesture of placing the open Gospel over the head of the chosen man... indicating "on the one hand, that the word embraces and watches over the Bishop's ministry and, on the other, that the Bishop's life is to be completely submitted to the word of God in his daily commitment of preaching the Gospel in all patience and sound doctrine" (cf. 2 Tm 4:2).¹ There is no doubt that the most intimate meaning of the Word of God in the life and the ministry of a Bishop derives from this fact of the Living Tradition, from this principle *lex orandi, lex credenda*: this concerns the existential and spiritual situation of God's Word in the life and ministry of the pastors of God's people, the successors of the Apostles, chosen by them to preserve the apostolic seed,² and directly the "constant proclamation of God's Word": *I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingly power: proclaim the word; be persistent whether it is convenient or inconvenient; convince, reprimand, encourage through all patience and teaching* (2 Tm 4:1-2).

The Directory *Apostolorum Successores*, in turn, uses the word "moderator" to more closely defines the *munus docendi* in relation to the Bishop, thus establishing three basic principles: 1) The Bishop's task of watching over the integrity of the doctrine, which implies presiding preaching ministry in the dioceses; 2) the profile of the Bishop's collaborators in the ministry of the Word, i.e. the episcopal responsibility with respect to the identity / appropriateness of this service and the conditions which may be put on its execution; 3) the general ordination of the ministry of the Word, in relation with the ordination and regulation of the preaching in the churches of the dioceses with respect to the homily, the catechesis, the diverse forms of

¹ Cf. PG 28.

² Cf. CCC 1555 ; cf. LG.

preaching (retreats, etc.) as well as seeing to it that the Word reaches all those who, for what reason it may be, cannot benefit from the common pastoral care.³

We see this how this large significance of the Word of God in Bishops' life / vocation and ministry is emphasized and accomplished, in each period of the Church's history, with changing nuances: the Word, which is the Lord Jesus Christ himself, must be proposed as a part of the apostolic mission (cf. Mt 28:16–20), –along with the Living Tradition– it must be the foundation of the particular Churches and of the ecclesiastical institutions and the fruit of their Christian life (cf. Col 1:3–6); and, finally, it must be the object of pastoral zeal for its adequate proposition and interpretation (cf. 2 Tm 4:1ss).

From the perspective of a certain “geography of the situation of the Word of God”, across the continents and within the life of the Churches⁴ we can appreciate the numerous ventures, the accomplishments and, at times, also the deficits in the execution today of the care for the Word today entrusted to the Bishops: in all fields, thanks to God, the Word has in itself a vital force (cf. Ac 6:7) and the efforts of many pastors unceasingly contribute to its progress as they preach in spite of the climate of tension that undeniably characterizes today as well some of the world's regions in the highly relevant theme of religious freedom.⁵

1. The Meaning of *Verbum Domini* for the Bishops

The Apostolic Exhortation *Verbum Domini*, a gift from the Holy Father Benedict XVI and a fruit of the XII Synod Assembly, is like the prism that illuminates and actualizes, for the third millennium, the relationship of the Bishop with the Word: the exhortation reflects this with many different nuances for the reader who, with his pastoral experience, approaches this wonderful gift of the Holy Father:

(1) Before all else, it is “an invitation to joy” and to renew one’s own spirituality based on the Holy Scriptures: the apostolic ministry, called to be a sign of hope for the world,⁶ can only be accomplished on the basis of the vocation to propose to the world the joy of the witnesses of the mystery of Pentecost, which is always alive in the Lord's Church. The beautiful “thematic inclusion” of *Verbum Domini* in the theme of joy frames Holy Father's devout offering to the Church and especially to the servants of the Gospel proclamation.⁷ The Bishop is called to base the joy of this proclamation precisely on the act of faith in the Word, like Mary *Mater Fidei*⁸, *Mater spei*⁹ and, therefore, *Mater laetitiae*¹⁰. With this aim, in the pastoral accompaniment of the entire People of God, the Bishop “lodged in God's Word” must strengthen his own identity not only as expert connoisseur but also as “witness” of the Gospel's message because he is personally the depository of the *communication between the Word of God and Christian testimony*.¹¹

(2) In a general way, the episcopal ministry encounters in *Verbum Domini* a clear indication of the characteristics of the proposal and the service of God's Word in the present circumstances:

a. To place God's Word more and more in the heart of the Church's entire life and activity: the Holy Father's explicit intention in the orientation of *Verbum Domini* is the starting point and the

³ Cf. PG 28-31.

⁴ Cf. *Second General Assembly of the Synod on the Word of God in the Life and the Mission of the Church (Monday October 6th, 2008): Report by continents*.

⁵ Cf. BENEDICT XVI, *Message for the World Day of Prayer for Peace 2011: “Religious Freedom, the Path to Peace.”*

⁶ Cf. PG 3ss.

⁷ Cf. VD 2 (“That our joy may be complete”) y 123 (“The Word and joy”).

⁸ Cf. *Ibid.* 27.

⁹ Cf. PG 3c.

¹⁰ Cf. VD 124.

¹¹ Cf. VD 97.

reception key of his exhortation on behalf of the pastors of God's People.¹² As "transmitter of the Word," the Bishop sees how *Verbum Domini* strengthens the central position of the Word of God, which certainly in need of a greater presence in church activities¹³ but directly related with the edification of the particular Church, just as this has happened since apostolic times (cf. 1 Cor 3:9);¹⁴ also in the primary and permanent formation of the priests, of the permanent deacons¹⁵ and of all Christians in general,¹⁶ especially with respect to the Biblical identity of catechism.¹⁷

b. Care for the celebrated Word: In a special way in the *Sacred Liturgy* as "Privileged Setting For The Word Of God"¹⁸, all the practical indications for "promoting fuller participation in the liturgy"¹⁹ are the updating of the Council's indication concerning the Bishop's service in the ordination of the Sacred Liturgy,²⁰ in this case of the *Liturgy of the Word* but also for all occasions and forms in which God's Word is proclaimed in the community and in its relation with the Sacraments, especially the Most Holy Eucharist.²¹

c. To propose the Word in intimate union with the testimony of one's personal life: situating the hour if the Church's mission in the Third Millennium with the perspective of "testimony," i.e. in the manifestation of a life that "has entered into the Covenant with God" through the Word.²² The recourse to "witnesses of the Word" by the holiness of their life, for *lectio viva est vita bonorum*, certainly crowns *Verbum Domini*'s particular proposition to the entire community, since "it is the will of God that all the faithful become holy" (cf. 1 Th 4:3), but it especially encourages, in the Third Millennium, the Bishop to see to the spiritual care of the faithful in their sanctification through listening to God's Word and experiencing it.

d. To promote in the faithful the Christian spirituality based on the prayerful reading of the Word: on the basis of the large and concrete method of *lectio divina*, in harmony with so many methodologies for a "prayerful reading" of the Word,²³ the text stresses the bishops' duty to reformulate the approach to Holy Scripture as "the place of encounter with Jesus Christ, who calls us to follow him."²⁴ To me the Holy Father's suggestion seems fundamental: "the Synod of Bishops frequently spoke of the importance of pastoral care in the Christian communities as the proper setting where a personal and communal journey based on the word of God can occur and truly serve as the basis for our spiritual life. With the Synod Fathers I express my heartfelt hope for the flowering of 'a new season of greater love for sacred Scripture on the part of every member of the People of God, so that their prayerful and faith-filled reading of the Bible will, with time, deepen their personal relationship with Jesus'."²⁵

(3) In *Verbum Domini* the Bishop finds the impulse to and the concrete proposal for the missionary action inherent to him: Animator par excellence of this missionary action²⁶ as

¹² Cf. VD 1.

¹³ Cf. VD 76.

¹⁴ "First among these is reading and meditating on the word of God. Every Bishop should always commend himself and feel commended "to the Lord and to the word of his grace, which is able to build up and give the inheritance among all those who are sanctified" (Acts 20:32) PG 15.

¹⁵ Cf. VD 78-81.

¹⁶ Cf. VD 75.

¹⁷ Cf. VD 74.

¹⁸ Cf. VD 52ss.

¹⁹ Cf. VD 64-71.

²⁰ Cf. SC 22; CONGREGATION FOR DIVINE WORSHIP AND THE DISCIPLINE OF THE SACRAMENTS, *Redemptionis Sacramentum* (March 25th, 2004) 19-25.

²¹ Cf. VD 52-55.

²² Cf. VD 22.

²³ Cf. VD 86.

²⁴ VD 72.

²⁵ *Idem*.

²⁶ "My brother bishops are directly responsible, together with me, for the evangelization of the world, both as members of the College of Bishops and as pastors of the particular churches" *RMiss* 63b.

successor of the “apostles / envoys,” the Bishop receives from *Verbum Domini* a very up-to-date horizon of the fields of the mission based on the Word of God:

a. *The Word must be announced to a world that urgent needs the “Logos of hope”:* “We cannot keep to ourselves the words of eternal life given to us in our encounter with Jesus Christ: they are meant for everyone, for every man and woman.”²⁷ In the Bishop’s conscience and in his duty to promote the mission based on the Gospel of life and inspired in the first person by the Holy Spirit through the apostolic ministry of the Bishops, the content that shines forth is not any kind of knowledge but an event: God personally revealed Himself²⁸ for the salvation of all people, without distinction: *God wills everyone to be saved and to come to knowledge of the truth* (1 Tm 2:3).

b. *It is necessary to promote in all the Baptized the spirit of the Mission that begins with listening to the Word:* The Holy Father’s indication seems directly addressed to the Bishops, to the priests, to the deacons, to consecrated life, to those who are called to preach, with an adequate familiarity with the Holy Scriptures²⁹ and naturally within the basic relation between proclamation and testimony: “the word of God reaches men and women “through an encounter with witnesses who make it present and alive.”³⁰

c. *It is necessary to strengthen the relation between the proclamation of the Word and the commitment in the world:* Especially with the spheres inherent in the episcopal care. The poor, since the bishop called by the Word to the “encounter with Christ present in the Poor” (cf. Mt 25:31ss), he must be *procurator pauperorum*,³¹ in the area of the commit for justice and human rights,³² through a charity effectively based on God’s Word³³ in the indispensable ministry of service to promote peace and reconciliation, in which he deploys through his ministry the prophetic force of the Word that announces Christ our peace (cf. Eph 2:14).³⁴

d. *It is necessary to address the message of the Word of Life to concrete faces in the missionary activity:* The evangelizing Church of the Third Millennium, and we could say in a direct and concrete way the Bishop, is called to contemplate those faces: the young, the migrants, the suffering, the poor, the commitment to care for the creation.³⁵

e. *It is necessary to bring the proclamation of God’s Word into the vast field of the cultures:* on the basis of the reality of the Mystery of the Incarnation itself, manifested in the Holy Scriptures, where this Word who “transcends cultural limits”³⁶ addresses itself to them, by entering and assuming the tasks of the dialogue with the universities, with the world of the arts, with the social media and in the field of the Biblical translations.³⁷

In short: *Verbum Domini* offers to the episcopal ministry many fields for accomplishing its service of the Word; but everything is largely based on the identity of the Word – the Lord Jesus Christ – and on the identity and mission of the episcopal ministry.

On account of all of this, it is worth pointing out that all of this wealth and the ample relationship between the Bishop and the Word are situated in the center of Chapter II (*Verbum in Ecclesia*) and characterized on the basis of the particular spirituality of the “ordained ministers” (nos. 78-81), i.e. starting with the experience of the Word as “vocation”³⁸, not only general but specific.

²⁷ VD 91.

²⁸ Cf. *Idem*.

²⁹ Cf. VD 94.

³⁰ Cf. VD 97.

³¹ Cf. PG 20.

³² Cf. VD 100-101.

³³ Cf. VD 103.

³⁴ Cf. *ibid.*, 79.

³⁵ Cf. VD 104-108.

³⁶ Cf. VD 116.

³⁷ Cf. VD 109-115.

³⁸ Cf. VD 77.

The text again stresses the importance of the Bishop's attitude before God's Word, which he must constantly read and meditate attentively, so that his transmission is preceded by cordial listening, as intimate as "dwelling within the word and allowing himself to be protected and nourished by it, as if by a mother's womb": for this reason it is Mary, *Virgo Audiens* and Queen of the Apostles, who is the model of the Bishop's personal reading and study of God's Word.

2. The Duty of the Church and Specifically of the Bishops to "let the Bible inspire all pastoral work"

The direct invitation / instruction, in *Verbum Domini* n° 73, to an "animatio biblica totius actionis pastoralis" unceasingly engage in its own way the episcopal charisma in the service of the Word of God. In his reflection on the situation of discipleship and the mission in Latin America, and concretely in his reference to the "places of encounter with the living Christ" enumerated by the Blessed John Paul II in his Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in America*,³⁹ the Bishops of this vast region of the Catholic world clearly indicate the need for pastoral action to "to offer the Word of God to the faithful as gift of the Father for the encounter with Jesus Christ living," a great mission requiring that all "bishops, priests, deacons, and lay ministers of the Word approach sacred scripture in a way that is not merely intellectual and instrumental, but with a heart "hungry to hear the Word of the Lord" (Am 8:11).⁴⁰

Likewise, in reference to the American continent and especially to Latin America, the Holy Father Benedict XVI identified the basic role of God's Word, which can illuminate the present situations in these vast regions: "we must train people to read and meditate on the word of God: this must become their staple diet, so that, through their own experience, the faithful will see that the words of Jesus are spirit and life (cf. Jn 6:63). 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. For this reason, I encourage the Bishops to strive to make it known."⁴¹

In turn, the indication of a "Biblical ministry" understood as a "letting the Bible inspire all pastoral work" distinguishes three specific areas cared for by all, and in a special way by the Bishops: to provide school of interpretation or knowledge of the Word, of communion with Jesus or prayer with the Word, and of inculturated evangelization or proclamation of God's Word.⁴²

In contemplating the wonderful architecture or "path / guide" with which the Holy Father wished to offer the contents of *Verbum Domini* by taking as guide of the text of the Prologue of the Gospel of John,⁴³ it is possible to see how the structure of the document in its three sections indicates the three fields of action of a "animatio biblica totius actionis pastoralis," that is:

(1) *The Biblical Pastoral Ministry as "School of Interpretation"*

The first part (*Verbum Domini*) speaks about the identity of the Word of God: about its personal mystery, about the "Christology of the Word", about the pneumatological dimensions and anthropologic considerations to be taken into account –for example, when thinking about the human person created "by the Word"⁴⁴ and the "human response to the Word"⁴⁵. However, it also addresses the need to reflect on the "hermeneutics of Sacred Scripture in the Church."⁴⁶

³⁹ Cf. EA 12ss.

⁴⁰ Cf. DA 247-248.

⁴¹ BENEDICT XVI, *Address on the occasion of the fifth general conference of the Bishops of Latin America and the Caribbean* (Shrine of Aparecida, Sunday, 13 May 2007).

⁴² Cf. DA 247-248.

⁴³ Cf. VD 5.

⁴⁴ Cf. VD 9.

⁴⁵ Cf. VD 22-28.

⁴⁶ VD 29-49.

This precisely is a “specific and urgent task” for the episcopal charisma but also for the entire Church, in the diverse fields of action:

- Provide more elements and more adequate knowledge of Word present in the Holy Scripture, but also on the living Tradition⁴⁷
- Of its proper understanding in relation to environments where exists, including a “removal of the dark passages of the Bible”⁴⁸
- Where “secularized hermeneutics” are practiced⁴⁹
- Where fundamentalism gives rise to all kinds the reductionism or to the disintegration of the Bible’s unity⁵⁰
- Or, like in the case of Latin America, in the teaching of the Blessed John Paul II, the fundamentalist sects constitute a real obstacle for the New Evangelization⁵¹ because they offer evermore widely a deformed vision of the Bible in the service of immediacy, emotionalism, etc.⁵²

Specifically and deeply connected to the service of a *Biblical pastoral ministry as “school of interpretation”*, the following tasks are directly attributed to the charisma of bishops and the Episcopal Conferences:

- The practice of the desired “dialogue between pastors, theologians and exegetes,” which avoids the exegetical / theological dualism unrelated to the interpretation of God’s Word “in the Spirit in which it was written.”⁵³
- The adequate planning of the theological studies so that they progress with the acknowledgement “sacred Tradition, sacred Scripture and the magisterium of the Church are so connected and associated that one of them cannot stand without the others.”⁵⁴
- Equally, Episcopal service itself and its responsibility for the “care of ecumenism” is based on the “common listening to the Holy Scriptures” and can facilitate the work of ecumenical translation of the Word of God.⁵⁵

Finally, and still within the field of the *Biblical pastoral ministry as “school of interpretation”* the Holy Father’s gesture of inviting to the relationship between the word of God and holiness, i.e. to the contemplation of the deepest and most authentic living interpretation of the Holy Scriptures, through the canonization of four saints on October 12th 2008, in the middle of the work of the Synod Assembly,⁵⁶ is a vibrant stimulation for the Bishops to assume the responsibility of presenting to God’s People these living witnesses of how the Word of God bears fruit in the life of the saint, often in the context of their local churches.

(2) The Biblical Pastoral Ministry as “School of Spirituality”

The second part of Verbum Domini situates God’s Word in the life of the Church: that is to say, in its vital center of response “that makes it possible to become children of God” (1 Jn 1:12–14). Starting from the “Privileged Setting for the Word of God,” i.e. the Sacred Liturgy, numbers 50 to 89 compose a large instructive section on the Biblical spirituality of the Catholic Church. The contents and highly practical suggestions of this entire section constitute a true “collection of ideas for the Biblical animation of the whole pastoral ministry”:

⁴⁷ Cf. VD 15-16.

⁴⁸ Cf. VD 42.

⁴⁹ Cf. VD 34-35.

⁵⁰ Cf. VD 39.

⁵¹ Cf. EA 72.

⁵² Cf. VD 73b.

⁵³ Cf. DV 12, VD 45.

⁵⁴ Cf. VD 47.

⁵⁵ Cf. VD 46.

⁵⁶ Cf. VD 49.

- Before all else, the Holy Father's emphasis on the identification of Holy Scripture as the meeting place with the Word of God.⁵⁷ Placed so well in the second part of this section, the definition of the "spirituality of meeting / following" Christ is expressed in a clearly foundational way for a "Biblical animation as school of spirituality": it is worthwhile rereading the Pope's expression once again: "With the Synod Fathers I express my heartfelt hope for the flowering of 'a new season of greater love for sacred Scripture on the part of every member of the People of God, so that their prayerful and faith-filled reading of the Bible will, with time, deepen their personal relationship with Jesus'."⁵⁸
- In a very direct way and even delineated earlier in the structure of *Verbum Domini*, the task of deepening in the faithful the self-understanding as "those who receive the Word of God, that is to say, those who live the obedience of faith and 'are born of God'."⁵⁹ This task is urgent for the episcopal service, which is called to enrich today more than ever the "Christian initiation"⁶⁰ and the entire developmental process of life in Christ in deep contact with the Holy Scriptures.
- The deepening and emphasis on the liturgical sphere as the place where the Word is listened to in relation with the Sacraments, especially the Most Holy Eucharist and proposing the reflection on the "sacramentality of the Word," a fundamental concept for adapting in a practical way the spirituality based on the reception of the Sacraments and listening to the Word.⁶¹
- The pastoral attention and the determination on behalf of the Bishops of the vast field of the proclamation, preaching, spiritual proposition, etc. of God's Word, a duty we have already alluded to from the perspective of the Directory *Apostolorum Succesores*, but which in *Verbum Domini* is extended in the fields of the Homily,⁶² the Sacraments of reconciliation and of Anointing of the the sick,⁶³ of the Liturgy of the hours,⁶⁴ of the Blessings,⁶⁵ and even explicit suggestions and practical proposals for a pastoral ministry of the liturgical domain in connection with God's Word to promote greater benefit from active participation in the liturgy and in the Church.⁶⁶
- Lastly, the practical proposals for a Biblical spiritual enrichment of all the vocations in Christ's Church: the ordained ministers,⁶⁷ the candidates for Holy Orders,⁶⁸ the consecrated life,⁶⁹ the lay faithful in general,⁷⁰ marriage and the family.⁷¹ A panoramic view of the states of life, the charismas and the situations in the Church of God that engages the creativity of the particular Churches and of their Bishops to see to it that truly the God's entire People nourishes itself with the Word and makes it into the center of its life.

Undoubtedly, *Verbum Domini* will enter into the Church's history as the direct expression of Pope Benedict XVI's magisterium in relation with a methodology of the "prayerful reading" of

⁵⁷ Cf. VD 72.

⁵⁸ VD 72b.

⁵⁹ Cf. VD 50.

⁶⁰ Cf. PG 38.

⁶¹ Cf. VD 56.

⁶² Cf. VD 59-60.

⁶³ Cf. VD 61.

⁶⁴ Cf. VD 62.

⁶⁵ Cf. VD 63.

⁶⁶ Cf. VD 64-71.

⁶⁷ Cf. VD 78.

⁶⁸ Cf. VD 82.

⁶⁹ Cf. VD 83.

⁷⁰ Cf. VD 84.

⁷¹ Cf. VD 85.

the Holy Scriptures,⁷² the *Lectio Divina*, whose teaching, promotion and celebration in the People of God pertains directly to the episcopal service:

- First of all, because the Word of God is “the basis of an authentic Christian spirituality,”⁷³ its animation is fundamental in the Bishop’s service to the Church. Confront therefore a proposed action of biblical spirituality centered in Holy Scripture in face of the varied and sometimes ambiguous field of various forms of spirituality in the Catholic world, especially where it may lead to syncretism, to devotion foreign to the life of Church, the marginal line between the Christian faith and magic, etc.
- This calls for an “prayerful reading that is firstly communitarian, ecclesial” and not individualist; and, for this reason, the charisma of the Pastors of God’s People is especially stimulated in its service “in the house of Word,” which is served by the Bishop’s constructing charisma (cf. 1 Cor 3:3ss.): this is a challenge in the face of the proposals promoting an individualistic Biblical reading and devotion and easily manipulated for example by the “theology of prosperity.”

Lastly, the whole “Biblical Mariology,” i.e. the rich and constant reference of the Holy Father to Mary as model of listening and responding to the Word of God, also invites a “Biblical spiritual animation” that pertains to the Bishops, so that through their pastoral care and teaching the relation between the Word of God and the Marian prayer in their particular churches is never neglected.⁷⁴

(3) *The Biblical Animation of the Entire Pastoral Ministry as “School of Mission”*

The proposal of a Word of God addressed to the world in the third part of *Verbum Domini* (nos. 90-124) is therefore a whole field of pastoral missionary action that, in harmony with the vocation of the Bishops as “servants of the Gospel of Jesus Christ for the hope of the world,”⁷⁵ offers a vast field of action:

- The task of deepening the “hour of the mission” undeniably present in the Church of the Third Millennium, but not always “founded and fomented in the Word of God”: “The Synod of Bishops forcefully reaffirmed the need within the Church for a revival of the missionary consciousness present in the People of God from the beginning.”⁷⁶
- Awakening “from contact with the Word of God” the missionary identity in the conscience of the baptized,⁷⁷ is an important task of the “Biblical animation of the pastoral ministry as “School of Mission” entrusted by nature to the successors of the Apostles: *Go into the whole world and proclaim the gospel to all creation* (Mk 16:15).
- Raising the awareness that the missionary proclamation is part of the *missio ad gentes*⁷⁸ which however is often within the same regions traditionally Christian where there are “many brothers who are baptized but not sufficiently evangelized.”⁷⁹
- Educating the Christians in the “interplay between witness and Word” in the style of Christ, the faithful Witness, as has already been said,⁸⁰ yet also in the clear proposal of not merely “shared values” but in the Person of Jesus Christ: “The Good News proclaimed by the witness of life sooner or later has to be proclaimed by the word of life. There is no

⁷² Cf. VD 86.

⁷³ Cf. *Idem*.

⁷⁴ Cf. VD 88.

⁷⁵ Cf. PG 2ss.

⁷⁶ VD 92.

⁷⁷ Cf. VD 94.

⁷⁸ Cf. VD 95.

⁷⁹ Cf. VD 96.

⁸⁰ Cf. VD 97.

true evangelization unless the name, the teaching, the life, the promises, the Kingdom and the mystery of Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God, are proclaimed.”⁸¹

- Assuming a "missionary pastoral animation" based on the Word, which involves the commitment to the world and to culture:⁸² there are areas particularly of conflict because of the increasing absence of action and of the Christian faith in places of human need and pain as well as cultural ones, either in account of the inability of such cultural dialogue because of the clear rejection of the faith dimension in the person by secularism, rationalism, and scientism, among others. Situations in many regions of the world, almost in all and in different forms, produce this "culture of death" propelled by the absence of God in the picture of man's self-understanding and, finally, ending in the many attacks and the loss of awareness of the dignity of the human person, thus lead away from the "Word of Life," who is Jesus Christ, the key to understanding man and his vocation.⁸³
- Finally, in the very current field of "inter-religious dialogue and respect for religious freedom" the Episcopal service has a concrete commitment to promote dialogue in this area so that the Word of God encourages reconciliation, peace and understanding between all peoples.⁸⁴

Thus, the thematic structure of the *Verbum Domini* helps concretize the fields of "Biblical animation of all pastoral work": the Holy Father's desire, his invitation to put the Word of God more and more in the center of the whole life and activity of the Church can be accomplished in this three dimensional way: faith, life and the mission animated by the Word of God.

3. Conclusions:

For life, conversion and pastoral service to the Word in the particular Churches

Received by the whole Church with undeniable expectation and appreciation, *Verbum Domini* determines the momentum that the Word of God is to have these days, especially through the service of Bishops to the Word that has been entrusted to the apostolic succession. So that the entire valuable magisterial contents of *Verbum Domini* can bear fruit abundantly through the episcopal charisma, it is without a doubt necessary:

1. *the Bishops give priority to an approach to Verbum Domini* itself in the key of its "spiritual" reading, i.e., personal reflection and in community in search of the clarifications *Verbum Domini* gives for the spiritual life and episcopal ministry.
2. to assume the necessary "pastoral conversion" before the Word of God thus proposed as the way of "vocational revival" but also as a horizon of the pastoral action of the Christian faith in the Third Millennium, which is still at its beginning.
3. with some urgency determine the actions that *Verbum Domini* indicates for the implementation of the Synod's ordinations in the three fields of "Biblical animation of the entire pastoral work": care for the proper understanding and interpretation of God's Word, the best definition of a "biblical spirituality" and the animation of the mission on the basis of the Word.

To this noble aim can be served the world, church and regional institutions that help the pastoral ministry of Bishops, above all, the Catholic Biblical Federation, in its wide extension on the five continents through the revival of their many valuable efforts, already praised by the Holy Father, in the field of the dissemination and the translation of the Word of God,⁸⁵ but also taking advantage of modern media and the world-wide presence of the FEBIC to invite the Pastors and

⁸¹ Pope Paul VI, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 22 quoted in *VD* 97.

⁸² Cf. *VD* nos. 99-108 and 109-116.

⁸³ Cf. *GS* 22.

⁸⁴ Cf. *VD* 120.

⁸⁵ Cf. *VD* 115.

the People of God to that “new evangelization” that, today more than ever, is the wide field of the mission and of the life of the Church, which depends on the Marian attitude of “new listening”⁸⁶ and responding to the Word of Life, our Lord Jesus Christ.

Some Common Abbreviations

- CCC** *Catechism of the Catholic Church* Rome, 1992.
DA *Document of Aparecida* Concluding Document of the V General Conference Of The Bishops Of Latin America And The Caribbean (May 13th-26th, 2007)
DV Vatican II, *Dei Verbum* Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation (November 18th, 1965)
EA John Paul II, *Ecclesia in America* Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, the Church in America (January 22nd, 1999)
LG Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium* Dogmatic Constitution on the Church in the world (November 21st, 1964)
PG John Paul II, *Pastores gregis* Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation on the Bishop, Servant of the Gospel of Jesus Christ for the Hope of the World (October 16th, 2003)
RMiss John Paul II, *Redemptoris missio* on the permanent validity of the Church's missionary mandate (December 7th, 1990)
SG Vatican II, *Sacrosanctum Concilium* Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy (December 4th, 1963)
VD Benedict XVI, *Verbum Domini* Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation on the Word of God in the life and in the mission of the Church (September 30th, 2010).



⁸⁶ Cf. VD 122.

Responses to Bishop Palma Paúl's Reflections

Statement on preaching in 2012

Bishop Palma Paúl's reflection reminds us of the critical role played by the bishops in bringing the Catholic faithful to a personal encounter with Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Word. For the bishops of the United States, this task closely aligns with their priority plans, namely, to promote the life and dignity of the human person; to strengthen marriage and catechesis, especially about the sacred liturgy; promote vocations and, to encourage an appreciation for the cultural diversity of the Church in the United States. Taking to heart *Verbum Domini's* emphasis on the importance of the homily in bringing people to this encounter, the bishops plan to issue a statement on preaching in 2012. This document will inspire homilists to ground their preaching in the Word, to catechize the faithful in the fullness of the truth, and to inspire in them a missionary spirit. Thus we will equip a new generation for the new evangelization.



+ Richard J. Malone

Bishop of Portland in Maine

Chairman, Committee on Evangelization and Catechesis

United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

Homily: Liturgical Lectio Divina

The Liturgy, so Part II of *Verbum Domini* emphasizes, is the privileged setting for the Word of God. The Liturgy of the Word is thus an integral part of liturgical worship, while the homily is an integral part of the Liturgy of the Word. The homily is more than an exposition of the biblical readings for a particular liturgical celebration. It seeks to "lead to an understanding of the mystery being celebrated" (VD 59) so as to motivate the faithful to live it (the mystery) out. Done properly, the homily is a "*lectio divina*" *par excellence*. Following the aspects of traditional "*lectio divina*" (cf. VD 87), the homily seeks first to explore what the biblical texts which have been proclaimed say in themselves (*lectio*), then to suggest what they say to the faithful (*meditatio*) and what conversion of mind, heart and life the Lord is asking of all (*contemplatio*). All this is followed by the prayers of the faithful in response to the Lord's word (*oratio*).

Before being done in the Liturgy, the "*lectio divina*" requires careful preparation. Indeed, if done conscientiously, the steps involved in the "*lectio divina*" serve as a very good method of preparing a homily. For they stimulate the homilist to apply the readings to the life experiences of the faithful. In this way, the scriptural readings become alive through the homily and there is a genuine proclamation of the word of God they convey.

+ John HA

Archbishop of Kuching, Malaysia



Source: ServFoto OssRom

Verbum Domini: Reception and Implementation

Verbum Domini, a kind of complete summary, a *Theological Summa on the Word of God*, should become an obligatory manual for everyone teaching and studying in the area of Theology and a point of reference, along with the Bible, for biblical pastoral ministry.

Since the reception and the implementation of *Verbum Domini* in each diocese is necessary and obligatory, it is to be hoped that each bishop will organize them in communion with his brother bishops. The reception aspect is the easier of the two; so the emphasis will have to be placed on the implementation, so that the journey can be made from *Verbum Domini* to *Verbum Domini*, that is, from the Exhortation *Verbum Domini* to *Verbum Domini* the Person, Jesus himself. This will allow the Exhortation to become a sign of the Sacrament *Verbum Domini*, which models, *Christifies* and enlightens the believer.

The implementation of *Verbum Domini* could be organized at all levels as follows: 1. Attentive listening to the Word; 2. profound meditation; 3. application to concrete life; 4. transfusion into life; 5. transmission *ad extra*.



+ Mathieu MADEGA LEBOUAKEHAN
Bishop of Port Gentil, Gabon

Verbum Domini and Catechesis

Among the many realms discussed by the Apostolic Exhortation *Verbum Domini*, I would like to emphasize the realm of catechesis. This is one of the prime responsibilities of bishops.

Catechesis concerns all ages of life and its true model is found in the course followed in the catechumenate of adults. Catechesis is the moment *par excellence* when a first discovery of the Holy Scriptures takes place. *Verbum Domini* n. 74 makes frequent reference to the General Directory of Catechesis but fails to mention the numerous problems that can be encountered by a catechesis nourished by the Word: a fundamentalistic reading of Biblical texts, a presentation of sacred history that makes of the Bible a book of the past, a moralizing approach to the texts, the limits of exegetical methods...

The bishop must see to it that the Bible presented in catechesis is a word that nourishes the life of faith. Scripture will thus be read, meditated on, and then assimilated in a context that is fully integrated with the liturgy, with personal prayer and with service to neighbor within the ecclesial community. The Word of God will then truly be able to serve as a source of nourishment for believers.



+ Pierre-Marie CARRÉ
Archbishop of Montpellier, France

Projects and Experiences

The XIIth Biblical Congress of the Middle East Biblical Federation

The Biblical Federation in the Middle East devoted its twelfth biblical congress to the Gospel of Matthew from January 23-28, 2011 in the convent of Our Lady of the Well in Jal Dib, Lebanon. More than 125 persons, priests, religious and laity, committed to the teaching of biblical studies and the biblical pastoral ministry in the various countries of the Middle East (Egypt, the Holy Land, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine, Syria), shared these days not only as a wellspring of biblical formation but also as a time for reinforcing the ties of friendship which are a source of continuing encouragement for their work.

The main speaker for this congress was the internationally renowned expert on Matthew, Professor Daniel Marguerat, emeritus professor of New Testament studies of the University of Lausanne in Switzerland. His five lectures treated major themes of the first Gospel: a Gospel of the Church, Jesus the Messiah, the Community discourse in Mt 18, the indicative of salvation and the ethical imperative and the God of judgment. More than thirty other speakers exposed their reflections on particular passages and themes of the Gospel, as well as on the reception of this Gospel in various oriental traditions. The exegetical sessions were framed by sessions of lectio divina and by the common celebration of the Eucharist according to the various rites of the local Churches.



Visits to the north of the country to the Orthodox monastery of Our Lady of Balamand and to the remote convent of Kaftoun allowed the participants to tap some of the ancient spiritual resources of Lebanon. The solidarity that grew intensely during the congress allowed the participants to listen attentively and respectfully to the testimonies of those often times painful events that mark so often the Christian communities in the Middle East.

As always, this truly spiritual event was profoundly characterized by the universally recognized Lebanese hospitality, embodied in particular by the attentive organization provided by Father Ayoub Chahwan, coordinator of the Middle East Subregion, and his assistant, Ms. Ghislaine Naufal. The congress was made possible by the generosity of the Drei-Königs-Aktion as well as by the Maronite Order. The publication in Arabic of the papers presented during the congress is in preparation.

Dei Verbum Biblical Pastoral Course 2012



The *Dei Verbum Biblical Pastoral Course 2012* shall be organized by the Divine Word Missionaries from September 5 to November 30, 2012 in the Centro Ad Gentes in Nemi, Italy. Detailed information and application forms may be obtained from Fr. James Uravil, SVD, Dei Verbum Biblical Pastoral Institute, Missionari Verbiti, Via dei Laghi bis, 52, I-00040 NEMI (Roma), ITALY, Tel: +39-06-9365 0001, Fax: +39-06-9365 00465, Email: dvnnemi@tiscali.it, uravil.j@gmail.com. Application deadline is May 15, 2012.

The Logos Bible Quiz: More than Half a million join a Bible Quiz in an Indian State

It's just awesome! 537,427 are the participants this year for Logos Mega Bible Quiz in Kerala the great and ancient centre of Christianity in India.

The Event

The Logos Bible Quiz, which is organized by Kerala Catholic Bishops' Council's Bible Commission, provides people opportunity to read and study the Holy Bible carefully. "Our aim is to promote interest in Bible reading and to cultivate a culture of systematic study of the Bible", says Rev. Dr. Joshy Mayyattil the chief co-ordinator of Logos Mega Quiz. He is the secretary of KCBC Bible Commission and Kerala Catholic Bible Society

The participants, in the quiz conducted by Bible Commission of the Kerala Catholic Bishops Council, are divided into five age groups. People of all walks of life can participate in this popular Bible quiz. Many religious and priests too participate in it.

The preliminary round of the Logos Quiz, conducted in parishes under the auspice of Diocesan Bible Apostolate directors, lasts for one and half hours in which the participants will answer multiple answer questions. Three toppers from each age category will participate in the written quiz is conducted in KCBC headquarters at Kochi. Top ten from each age category from this round will be eligible for the final round which includes audio, video, written, oral and Bible verse recitation tests. Once the final round gets over, the winners in each category is awarded with gold medals and cash prizes. And the champion of the Logos Quiz (*Logos Prathibha*) will be declared.

Last year the *Logos Prathibha* (i.e., Logos Champion) was Miss Reshma Pius a 16-year old S.S.L.C. student hailing from an economically poor family. This Bible lover has proved that her family's richness consists in their love for the Scripture.



A Logos History

The Logos Quiz, in Kerala was started in the millennium year by Rev. Dr. Philip Thayyil, the then KCBC Bible Commission Secretary. As a prologue to the Logos Quiz, efforts like Biblos had been introduced. The bishops in Kerala were impressed by the idea and they gave permission to conduct this in State level every year.

In the following years, the quiz, which is organized with the help and support of diocesan apostolate directors and Bible Society Executive Committee, became more popular among the Bible enthusiasts and young people. Rev. Dr. Cyrus Velamparambil, who served as the Commission secretary from 2001 to 2009 played a key role in making the Logos Quiz popular among the populace.

The interest in the Quiz has gone up steadily since it was initiated in 2000 the Great Jubilee Year. The contest had only 125,000 participants in the first year, and the number of participants is increasing every year. This year saw an increase of 54000 compared to last year's registration (483172).

A Home Affair

People prepare themselves well in advance for the quiz. The syllabus of almost 35 chapters from the Old and New Testaments for the quiz is announced a year in advance so that the contestants can get ample time to prepare. Often people carry their personal Bibles during travels in order to read the portions. In many cases parents and children get ready for the Logos making collective study and preparing notes in the family. It is not a rare thing in Kerala to see members of the same family, especially children, competing among themselves to learn biblical verses by-heart. In some places, the participants of the Logos Quiz sit together after the Sunday Catechesis and revise the topics. Study guides are also available. Last year more than 10 various guides were available in the bookshops.

In various dioceses, the participants, under the supervision of the diocesan Bible apostolate department, prepare for the Quiz by adopting their own study tools. This year the diocesan Bible apostolate of the Archdiocese of Trichur conducted Logos Family test in which 400 families participated. Similarly they organised a Bible Phrase Writing Competition, in which more than 2500 people took part. Fr. Lijo Chittilappilly, the diocesan apostolate director said that in this competition some participants wrote about more than 200 Bible verses in two hours.

Logos Quiz 2011

On-line registration facility was introduced this year (visit: www.logosquiz.org). The diocesan level Logos quiz will be conducted on the 25th of September and the state level final written exam falls on the 27th of November. The winners of the state-level written quiz will appear for the final round of Logos Quiz on the 4th of December. The final round will be broadcasted through TV channels. The syllabus for this year is as follows: Exodus 16-24; Mathew 15-28; I Peter. 32 dioceses, including one from Tamilnadu and one from Karnataka, participate in the Logos Quiz 2011.

In Future

“Logos Quiz has become a Herculean task for the conducting team. However it is also a pleasant task”, says Bishop George Punnakkottil the Chairman of KCBC Bible Commission. “To reduce the preparatory work load, this year we are introducing on-line registration. In a few years we will be able to conduct on-line exam also. Thus the desire of numerous Keralites abroad to participate in the Logos Quiz would be realized”. The KCBC Bible Commission has plans to make this Bible Quiz popular in other parts of the world too. For this purpose, the Bible Quiz, which is currently conducted in Malayalam and English, will be made available in other languages, added Bishop Punnakkottil.

To make the Logos Quiz more effective the Bible Commission intends to introduce full-fledged bible quiz using modern equipments and technology. The possibility of introducing scholarship for Bible study for the Logos winners is under consideration.

The e-mails that the organizers of the Logos Bible Quiz receive are evidences for the desire of the people around the globe for such methods and tools for Bible study. The great success of this Bible contest in Kerala could be a pointer for the universal Church – Bible Quiz, if culturally adapted, may be one of the best means for the new evangelization.

(For further details, visit:

www.keralabiblesociety.com;

E-mail id:

secretary@keralabiblesociety.com)

Federation News

The CBF International Congress on “Sacred Scripture in the Life and Mission of the Church”, Rome, December 1-4, 2010

One month after the publication of Pope Benedict XVI's Apostolic Exhortation “*Verbum Domini*”, the Catholic Biblical Federation organized an international Congress in Rome at the beginning of December 2010 on “Sacred Scripture in the Life and Mission of the Church”. More than one hundred persons coming from around the world participated in this congress. More than 20 cardinals, bishops, university professors and other personalities joined forces to reflect on *Verbum Domini* and the multiple challenges which his Holiness expressed therein in view of the “biblical animation of all pastoral activity of the Church”. Here follow the introduction pronounced by Bishop Vincenzo Paglia, president of the CBF and a presentation of the publication in Italian of the congress conferences.

Introduction to the Congress

The Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation of Benedict XVI, *Verbum Domini*, has just been issued. We have all been anxiously awaiting its publication, not only we Catholics, but the entire Christian world. As you well remember, we all desired the celebration of a Synod on the Word of God. And we then took part in it with great passion. It is with emotion that I recall the words which the Holy Father addressed to me at the end of the synod – words of gratitude both for the commitment of the Federation to the biblical apostolate and for our participation in the work of the Synod. The general title of the Synod borrowed that of the Sixth chapter of the Conciliar Constitution *Dei Verbum*. It was precisely this chapter that motivated Cardinal Bea to found our Federation.



Since that time a full forty years have gone by. They have been years in which the Federation has grown, both in the numbers of

its members and in its pastoral engagement aimed at helping believers to approach the Sacred Scriptures ever more frequently and to nourish themselves on it abundantly. In fact, the biblical apostolate has seen an extraordinary development in all of the local Churches of the various continents. And they owe this to a great extent also to the Federation. In the last Plenary Assembly of Dar Es Salaam we came to understand that a new missionary thrust having a clear foundation in the Holy Scriptures was becoming ever more urgent. To summarize, we came to the conclusion that we had to move from “biblical pastoral ministry” to “biblical animation of the whole pastoral ministry”.

Well then, dear friends, I believe that the new Apostolic Exhortation, while illuminating the path to this goal, also provides us with an extraordinary wealth of instructions. We can say then that the *Dei Verbum* and the *Verbum Domini* constitute an invaluable and inseparable diptych which should certainly guide the life of the Church and also, obviously, the commitment of our entire Federation. Already the incipit of the Exhortation “*Verbum Domini*” offers us the key to the understanding of the whole text. Its liturgical ring – it is what the reader affirms

aloud at the end of the liturgical reading of a passage of Sacred Scripture – ushers us into the indispensable attitude of listening and of prayer, which we should always have when we approach the Scriptures. After all, the incipit of the Conciliar Constitution itself launches this perspective: “*Dei Verbum religiose audi-ens*”. It is in an attitude of devout listening that the disciple receives the Word which the Holy Scriptures contain.

The International Congress wishes above all to express our gratitude to the Holy Father, in the name of the Federation, for the gift of the Exhortation. We would then like to offer an immediate response to what the text of the Holy Father calls for in the Church. I would like for the Federation to be the first to

respond with generosity and insight to the engagement for a new evangelization of the world at the beginning of the new millennium. The first ten years of this millennium have hardly gone by. And the world continues to be marked by conflicts, injustice, hunger, indifference with respect to the weak, a growing climate of violence. There is need for a renewed listening to the Word and for a greater boldness in communicating it. The talks and reflections which we will be making with reference to the Apostolic Exhortation will help us to better understand its contents and to offer the entire Federation a help for a new thrust in the service of the Word of God.

+ Vincenzo Paglia

“Ascoltare, rispondere, vivere”

Dall’esortazione “Verbum Domini” alla vita della Chiesa e della società oggi

“To listen, to respond, to live”:

From the Exhortation “*Verbum Domini*” to the Life of the Church and of Society Today

The Bible is the most translated book in the world, but can we say that such widespread diffusion is matched by a genuine knowledge? How much do the hearing and prayerful reading of the Word of God actually arrive at their goal of permeating the lives of believers in Jesus and of Christian communities? In Christian formation, at every level, does the Bible today really have the essential role that is its due? It was to these and other such questions that the Synod of Catholic bishops attempted to respond when, in 2008, at the wish of Benedict XVI, they made the theme of the Word of God in the life of the Church the focus of their reflections. Immediately following the publication of the post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Verbum Domini*, which came out in November 2010, the Catholic Biblical Federation convoked, the following month, an international congress whose purpose was to discuss the suggestions put forward by the Pope and to reap their fruit.



This volume, somewhat provocatively entitled *Ascoltare, rispondere, vivere* (To listen, to respond, to live), contains many authoritative contributions presented at this international meeting. Already the list of their authors shows this: David Banon, Enzo Bianchi, Chino Biscontin, Cesare Bissoli, Ernesto Borghi, Gherardo Colombo, Rino Fisichella, Martin Klöckener, Kurt Koch, A. Miller Milloy, Vincenzo Paglia, Paola Pitagora, Gianfranco Ravasi, Alexander M. Schweitzer, Mark Sheridan, Thomas Söding, Ambrogio Spreafico, Armand Puig i Tàrrach, Peter Kodwo Turkson and Florian Wilk. Priests and lay persons, Catholic and non-Catholic, biblical scholars and representatives of other

areas of theological and non-theological knowledge, Europeans and non-Europeans, representatives of the Roman Curia and bishops engaged in pastoral ministry: the significant heterogeneity of the writers of these pages already testifies to the broad interest aroused by *Verbum Domini*.

The volume, edited by the undersigned, is articulated in three parts. The first (*"Bibbia, tradizione, ermeneutiche"* – Bible, tradition, hermeneutics) offers a series of insightful and in-depth reflections and observations on the value of the transmission of the biblical texts, on Jewish, Catholic and Protestant hermeneutical principles and methods and on the relationship between biblical exegesis/hermeneutics and Christian theology also in the context of the contemporary discussion. The second part (*"Il testo biblico nella storia e nella vita di tutti"* – the biblical text in history and in the lives of all), beginning with the treatment of the relationships between the biblical texts and the life of human beings of all times down to our own, reflects on the relations between the biblical scriptures and, respectively, the realms of the liturgy, of homiletics, of prayerful reading and of catechesis.

The third part (*"Bibbia, società, cultura"* – Bible, society, culture) provides the reader with orientation for examining the impact of Bible reading on contemporary social and political relationships and on the universal culture of all times, from theology to the figurative arts, to drama and the civil formation of the younger generations. The fourth and final part (*"Per una pastorale ecclesiale veramente biblica. Dall'esortazione apostolica Verbum Domini al futuro della chiesa e della società"* – Toward a truly biblical ecclesial pastoral ministry. From the Apostolic Exhortation *Verbum Domini* to the future of the Church and of society) focuses the collective attention, in an ecumenical and intercultural key, on the importance of the Bible for global human formation, with the prospect of basing every sphere of ecclesial activity essentially and primarily on the biblical root and on an existential reading of the Hebrew and Christian scriptures.

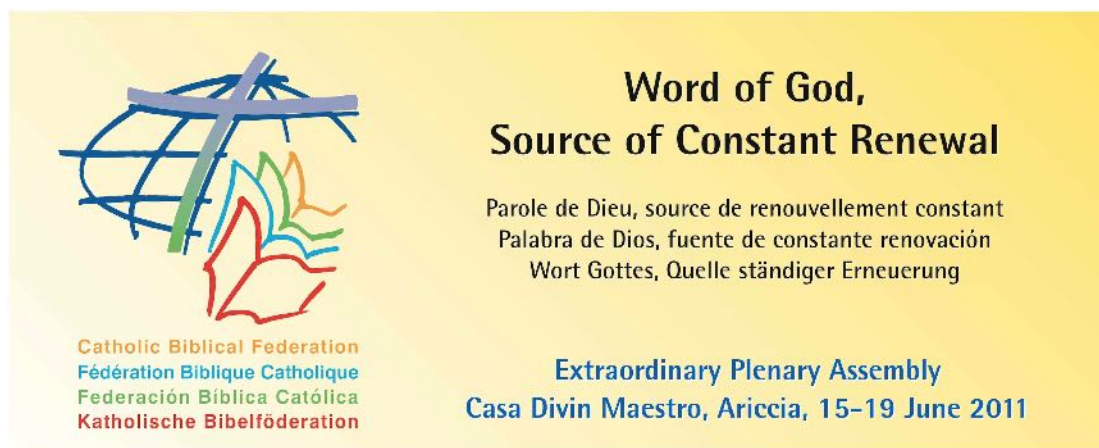
The book in question aims to show, without claiming to exhaust the topic, the fundamental domains in which, through the words of the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures, the God of Sinai and of Jesus Christ speaks to men and women of all times. This implies the necessity of a renewed awareness of the Bible's centrality and of the consequent assumption of responsibility on the part of all in order to arrive at the objective of making truly biblical the entire pastoral activity of the Church, within its ranks and in contemporary societies. Much has been done on the basis of Vatican II and much remains to be done: the goal of this volume is to serve as a persuasive aid in this direction, for the life of the Church of today and tomorrow.



Source: ServFoto Oss Rom

The translation of this book into a variety of languages following the Italian edition here presented would constitute a very important cultural event which would also help to relaunch the intercontinental activity of the CBF, which is – as we well know, but perhaps not everyone knows – is precisely an international organization in the service of the diffusion of the existential knowledge of the Bible in accordance with the directives of Vatican II (cf. Constitution *"Dei Verbum"*, 22). In the very implementation of so many directives coming from *Verbum Domini* such a task could find a purpose of its own, one that would be of enormous significance for the good of the Church and of society in our time.

Ernesto Borghi



CBF Plenary Assembly in Ariccia, June 15-19, 2011

The Catholic Biblical Federation (CBF) met in extraordinary plenary assembly (EPA) in the Casa Divin Maestro in Ariccia, Italy, from June 15-19. It was placed under the guiding title “Word of God, Source of Constant Renewal” and nourished itself from the narrative of the Emmaus disciples. It worked towards the renewal both of the relations between the members and officers of the CBF, as well as of its reference text and governing boards. This EPA was attended by more than 120 delegates, representing some 65 full members and 70 associate members, including proxy mandates. Among the participants were 17 bishops, primarily from Africa, Asia-Oceania and Latin America.

The decision to hold this Assembly had been made by the Executive Committee in line with the decisions of the round table meeting of Executive Committee members, Administrative Board members and coordinators, under the auspices of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, held in December 2009. This assembly was to deal with both elective and constitutional matters. In this regard, it was to renew the membership of the Executive Committee and it was to work toward the revision of the CBF constitution, as required by Cardinal Kasper, former president of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity.

The reports both of the outgoing moderator of the Executive Committee, Bishop Vincenzo Paglia, president of the CBF, and of the Treasurer, Prof. Wolfgang Simler, member of the Administrative Board, were approved by the Plenary Assembly. Let it be noted that the Treasurer’s report had been previously approved by the outgoing Executive Committee in its final meeting on the eve of the opening of the EPA. This last mentioned approval constitutes, in fact, the official discharge accorded to the Treasurer and the Administrative Board, since the Administrative Board is directly responsible to the Executive Committee in the accomplishment of its mission.

During the Assembly, the following member organizations were elected to the Executive Committee:

- the Catholic Bishops Conference of Tanzania, as the Full member representative of the region of Africa
- the Centro Biblico Pastoral para America Latina (CEBIPAL), mandated by the Consejo episcopal latinoamericano (CELAM), as the Full member representative of the region of the Americas
- the Episcopal Commission for the Biblical Apostolate (ECBA), mandated by the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of the Philippines, as the Full Member representative of the region of Asia-Oceania

- the Associazione Biblica Italiana, mandated by the Conferenza Episcopale Italiana, as the Full Member representative of the region of Europe-Middle East
- the Catholic Biblical Foundation of South Africa and
- the United Chinese Catholic Biblical Association, the two Associate Member representatives.

The reelection of the major part of the former EC members points indeed to the confidence that the members by and large hold in the outgoing EC.

The EPA deliberations concerning the revision of the CBF constitution have allowed, on the basis of a frank and lively contradictory debate, the further specification of the fundamental options of this text that shall constitute the reference text for the life and administration of the CBF. The EPA has given the new Executive Committee the mandate to designate the members of a committee that shall complete the revision process and submit the proposed draft of the revised constitution to the full members of the Federation and to the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity for approval and then to the Full Members present at the next Ordinary Plenary Assembly, foreseen for 2014. It is clear that the present CBF constitution remains fully in effect until a revised constitution has been adopted by the Full members during a Plenary Assembly, approved by the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity and promulgated by the President of the CBF.

The Executive Committee, comprised of the representatives of the newly elected members (Bishops Pablo David and Telesphor Mkude, Fathers Giuseppe De Virgilio and Fidel Oñoro, Ms Cecilia Chui and Ms. Teresa Wilsnagh) and of the ex officio members (Bishop Vincenzo Paglia, president; Msgr. Juan Usma Gómez, representative of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity; and Abbot Primate Notker Wolf, chairman of the Administrative Board [present during preliminary discussions]), met in its constitutive meeting on June 18, 2011, following the conclusion of the EPA. It

elected Bishop Mkude as EC-moderator and Bishop David as vice-moderator. The thus constituted Executive Committee decided, among other things, the following measures:

- The mandate of the Administrative Board members is confirmed up until December 31, 2011: Abbot Primate Notker Wolf, osb, chairman; Dr. Thomas Goppel, vice chairman; Prof. Wolfgang Simler, Treasurer. Sister Elisabeth-Magdalena Zehe had submitted her resignation effective at the end of the Plenary Assembly, but may be willing to continue through the end of 2011. The other members have submitted their resignation effective, at the latest, December 31, and are willing to cease their mandates as soon as a new Administrative Board is constituted.
- The term of office of the regional and subregional coordinators, which expires with this plenary assembly, has been prolonged until December 31, 2011. The process of the renewal of the coordinators should begin within the next few weeks.
- Prof. Thomas Osborne has been requested to ensure the function of Acting General Secretary up until December 31, 2011.
- The various issues requiring the immediate attention of the Executive Committee shall be prepared during the next months and deliberated upon during the next Executive Committee meeting, planned for the first half of September, 2011 at the General Secretariat in Sankt Ottilien.


The EPA delegates and the boards and officers of the CBF are well aware of the fact that this assembly could not have taken place without the generous support of the German and Swiss Catholic Funding Agencies, Missio Aachen, Kirche in Not, Adveniat and Schweizer Fastenopfer. Both the delegates during the EPA and the newly elected Executive Committee in their constitutive meeting after the assembly have expressed their heartfelt gratitude for the Funding Agencies' support of this plenary assembly

and indeed of the activities of the Federation over the years. Their continuing support is of utmost importance in the CBF renewal process that is now underway.

In view of the fact that the meeting of the EC, scheduled for the end of November in the General Secretariat in Sankt Ottilien, did not attain the necessary quorum, the terms of office of the various boards and officers have

been prolonged through March 31, 2012 or until the EC takes the necessary measures for renewing the Administrative Board and appointing a new general secretary and subregional coordinators, whichever comes first. A renewed attempt to convene the EC is now planned for the beginning of March in Rome.

Kurt Cardinal Koch, Message to the EPA Delegates



PONTIFICIUM CONSILIUM
AD CHRISTIANORUM UNITATEM FOVENDAM

9 June 2011

E Civitate Vaticana, die

PROT. N. 1077/2011/c

DIOCESI TERNI - NARNI - AMELIA
SEGRETARIA DEL VESCOVO

15 GIU 2011

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Dear Bishop Paglia,

I am pleased to send my fraternal greetings to you and to all the delegates of the CATHOLIC BIBLICAL FEDERATION [CBF] who are gathered in an Extraordinary Plenary Assembly in Ariccia. You face three days of intensive work and reflection in the awareness that the Word of God is the Source of Constant Renewal. In so doing you are following the inspiration of the Holy Father Pope Benedict XVI in his Apostolic Exhortation *Verbum Domini* on the Word of God in the Life and Mission of the Church. The Word of God does indeed challenge all of us to continually evaluate our lives individually and as an association, to discern what is good and humbly to grow into fullness.

In these days you will be called to revise the CBF Constitution in order to make the Federation better able to undertake its work in the years to come. This cannot take place adequately without having a clear picture of the path of the CBF over the years.

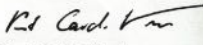
The creation of the CBF has its origins in the vision of the first president of the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity, Cardinal Augustin Bea, who wished to promote the Biblical Apostolate in the Catholic Church, according to the Dogmatic Constitution *Dei Verbum* of the Second Vatican Council. In other words, to ensure that Catholics would shine in the world as the people of the word of God, rejoicing in it daily with the help of the church and spreading the Good News to the end of the earth.

Over these decades, the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity has been privileged to witness the devotion of many Catholics to Biblical Apostolate, men and women alike: priests, religious, consecrated persons as well as numerous laypeople who in communion with their local bishops have been tirelessly working in Lord's field to sow the seed of the Word. The constant ministry of many servants of the word of God is certainly a blessing of God for his Church.

Difficult moments also have been part of this common path with the CBF. As Christians we are deeply convinced that "the realist is the one who recognizes in the word of God the foundation of all things" (*Verbum Domini* 10). And it is in this spirit that the Extraordinary Plenary Assembly has been convoked. New and suitable arrangements will certainly allow the Federation humbly to open itself to the vitality of the word of God so that it may be "ever more fully at the heart of every ecclesial activity" (*Verbum Domini* 1) in the awareness that our times must be increasingly marked by a new hearing of God's word. This is a *kairos*, a favorable moment for the CBF.

May the Holy Spirit awaken a hunger and thirst for the word of God, and raise up zealous heralds and witnesses of the Gospel. May the Holy Spirit constantly call convinced and persuasive hearers and preachers of the word of the Lord (cf. *Verbum Domini* 122). May He conduct the efforts of all the participants in this important gathering to improve the CBF Constitution, which must include a conversion and reconciliation process that enhances healing of memories. Let us never forget that the main goal is not to renew structures but to overcome obstacles so that "the word of God may more and more fill the hearts of all" (*Dei Verbum* 26).

Please be assured of my best wishes, and prayers for you all during this assembly.



Kurt Cardinal Koch
President

Most Reverend Vincenzo Paglia
President of the Catholic Biblical Federation
Vescovado
Piazza Duomo 11
05100 TERNI (Fax 0744 546554)

Changes in BICAM

SECAM gets new Director of BICAM

Rev. Fr. Yves-Lucien Evaga Ndjana, from the Archdiocese of Yaoundé, Cameroun has been appointed the new Director of Biblical Centre for Africa Madagascar (BICAM) at the Symposium of Episcopal Conference of Africa and Madagascar (SECAM).



His appointment letter signed by His Eminence, Cardinal Polycarp Pengo, President of SECAM, took effect on October 27, 2011 for three years and is subject for renewal. He replaces Rev Fr. Moise Adekambi, who has completed his nine years service.

Until his appointment, Fr. Ndjana was the Director of Biblical Apostolate of the Archdiocese of Yaoundé. Between 2009 and 2011, he was a Professor at the Biblical Apostolate of the Major Seminary of Nkolbisson and School of Theology of St. Cyprian at Ngoya all in Cameroon. He was born on May 19, 1972 and ordained Priest on December 11, 1999. Fr. Ndjana speaks French, German and English.

SECAM bids Fr. Adekambi farewell

The Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar (SECAM) and other well-wishers bade farewell to Rev Fr. Moise Adekambi, Director of Biblical Centre for Africa Madagascar (BICAM) at a farewell Mass held at the SECAM Secretariat in Accra recently.

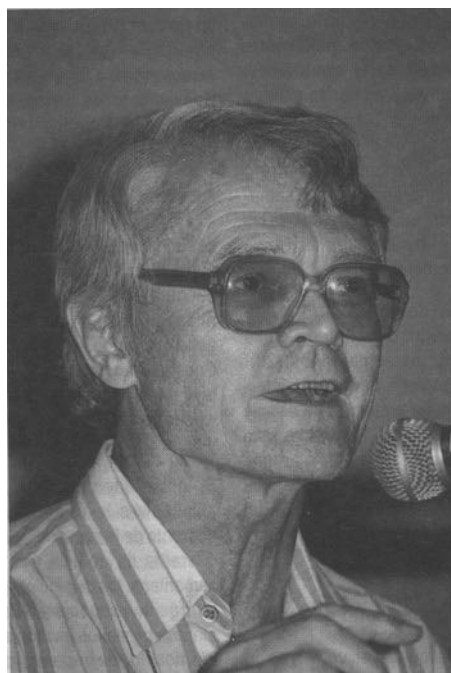
Fr. Adekambi is returning to his home country, Benin after the completion of nine years in the office of BICAM.

His Eminence, Cardinal Theodore Sarr, first Vice President of SECAM the main celebrant at the farewell Mass urged Christians to emulate the love of Christ which made Him to die on the cross to save humankind asking them to serve one another. He urged Fr. Adekambi to continue to rely on God and prayed for success and God's guidance for his life. His Eminence, Cardinal Polycarp Pengo, President of SECAM in a speech read on his behalf by Rev. Fr. Joseph Komakoma, First Deputy Secretary General of SECAM, thanked Fr. Adekambi for the services he had rendered to the Church and Africa for the past nine years. He expressed his appreciation to Fr. Adekambi for having animated the regions and various National Episcopal Conferences through programmes, publications and visits. He also wished him the bests in his future endeavours. Rev. Fr. Francior-Xavier Damiba, Secretary General of SECAM on behalf of the Secretariat thanked Fr. Adekambi for the service, friendship and his contribution towards building unity among the staff of SECAM.

Fr. Adekambi who introduced Rev. Fr. Yves-Lucien Evaga Ndjana from Cameroun as the new Director of BICAM was thankful to God for how far He had brought him and also to the staff for their cooperation over the years. He was grateful to the Bishops and the Standing Committee Members for the opportunity they gave him to serve the Church on the continental level.

Message to Father Carlos Mesters on the occasion of his 80th birthday

The Catholic Biblical Federation congratulates Father Mesters for his 80th birthday and wishes him good health and renewed energy in his commitment to the biblical inspiration of the entire pastoral life of the Church. It is with sincere gratitude that the CBF recalls Father Mesters' many contributions to the work of the Federation over the years. In particular our thanks goes to him for having shown us time and again how important it is to recognize that the mysteries of the Kingdom have been revealed first of all to the "childlike" and not "to the wise and the learned" (Mt 11:25). In the words of Verbum Domini, "we ... need to recognize and appreciate the fact that the poor are themselves agents of evangelization" (107). Dear Father Mesters, your efforts and testimony have certainly contributed to this growing consciousness in the Catholic Church! Ad multos annos!



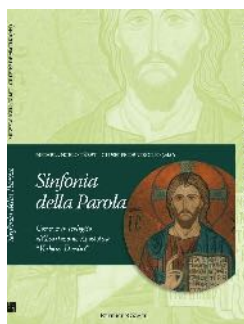
VERY REV. FR. NICHOLAS LOWE CALLED TO ETERNAL REST IN THE LORD

Very Rev. Fr. Nicholas Lowe, from the Diocese of Chilaw in Sri Lanka, has been called to Eternal Rest in the Lord on November 7, 2011. He served at Balcombe Place as the National Director of Catechetics. He was also actively involved in Catechetics, Education and Bible Apostolate of his Diocese. We remember him fondly from the Plenary Assembly in Ariccia. Let us keep him and his family in our prayers. May he rest in peace.

Biblical Pastoral Publications

Michelangelo Tábet – Guiseppe De Virgilio (eds.), *Sinfonia della Parola: Commento teologico all'Esortazione Apostolica post-sinodale "Verbum Domini" di Benedetto XVI*, Editrice Rogate, Roma 2011, 184 pp.

This is the first theological commentary on the Apostolic Exhortation *Verbum Domini*. Pope Benedict XVI, in welcoming the work of the 12th Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops (6-25 October 2008), wished to present to all believers the riches of the Word of God and the fruits that the study of Sacred Scripture has yielded in the course of these post-conciliar years.



The Exhortation helps us to grasp the dynamic of the Church's life, guided as it is by the light of this Word, from which emerges the spiritual path that every believer is called to take in the exercise of

this or her proper responsibility. Only through a recovery of the theological richness and the ecclesial dimension of the divine message are we able to achieve a genuine and fruitful encounter with God and his Word. In this perspective is also to be understood the invaluable service of the Catholic Biblical Federation (cf. *VD*, 115).

The present volume, which sees the collaboration of a number of teachers of the Pontifical University Santa Croce (Carlos Jódar, Carla Rossi Esagnet, Michelangelo Tábet, Juan José Silvestre, Guiseppe De Virgilio, Bernardo Estrada, Enrique Colom, Juan José García Noblejas, Guilio Maspero) under the direction of Professor M. Tábet and G. De Virgilio, presents the salient points of the Apostolic Exhortation in a language that is simple and direct. Besides their value to students of academic faculties, these pages can be of benefit to all those who would like to have a better knowledge of the Bible in order to deepen their faith and know how to witness to it in a journey of sanctity and of ecclesial communion.

The Use and Abuse of the Bible : A Brief History of Biblical Interpretation / Henry Wansbrough OSB. – London; New York: T&T Clark, 2010. - XII, 209 p.

The Seed and the Soil : Engaging with the Word of God / Pauline Hoggarth. – Global Christian Library, 2011. – XII, 156 p.

“Viva ed efficace è la Parola di Dio” (Eb 4,12) : Linee per l’animazione biblica della pastorale : Miscellanea in onore di don Cesare Bissoli / Corrado Pastore (a cura). – Leumann : Elledici, 2010. – 334 p.

The Gospel of Mark : Lectio divina continua / Thomas P. Osborne. – United Bible Societies, 2012. – 118 p.

Commento alla Verbum Domini : In memoria di P. Donath Hercsick, S.I. / a cura di Carmen Aparicio Valls – Salvador Pié-Ninot. - Roma, Gregorian & Biblical Press, 2011. -(Theologia 4).



Catholic Biblical Federation
Fédération Biblique Catholique
Federación Bíblica Católica
Katholische Bibelföderation

The greater our openness to God's word, the more will we be able to recognize that today too the mystery of Pentecost is taking place in God's Church. The Spirit of the Lord continues to pour out his gifts upon the Church to guide us into all truth, to show us the meaning of the Scriptures and to make us credible heralds of the word of salvation before the world. Thus we return to the First Letter of Saint John. In God's word, we too have heard, we too have seen and touched the Word of life. We have welcomed by grace the proclamation that eternal life has been revealed, and thus we have come to acknowledge our fellowship with one another, with those who have gone before us marked with the sign of faith, and with all those who throughout the world hear the word, celebrate the Eucharist and by their lives bear witness to charity. This proclamation has been shared with us – the Apostle John reminds us – so

that "our joy may be complete" (1 Jn 1:4).

The synodal assembly enabled us to experience all that Saint John speaks of: the proclamation of the word creates *communion* and brings about *joy*. This is a profound joy which has its origin in the very heart of the Trinitarian life and which is communicated to us in the Son. This joy is an ineffable gift which the world cannot give. Celebrations can be organized, but not joy. According to the Scripture, joy is the fruit of the Holy Spirit (cf. *Gal* 5:22) who enables us to enter into the word and enables the divine word to enter into us and to bear fruit for eternal life. By proclaiming God's word in the power of the Holy Spirit, we also wish to share the source of true joy, not a superficial and fleeting joy, but the joy born of the awareness that the Lord Jesus alone has words of everlasting life (cf. *Jn* 6:68).

(*Verbum Domini* 123)