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Editorial

„This is nothing else but an abode of God, the gateway to heaven!” (Gen 28:17)

Jacob's age-old dream of the stairway bridging heaven and earth expresses both the distance and nearness between the divine and the human world. The angels mounting and descending the ladder open our spirit to the multitude of the forms of mediation of God and his Good News to men and women across the ages. John's Gospel proposes a Christological reading of the Genesis text, pointing to the revelation of the divine in the person of Jesus, the Son of Man. The Word, coming from the bosom of the Father, has taken flesh and dwells in our world, as the "exegete" of God's love for humanity. He is the abode of God and the gateway to heaven! This is reason enough to celebrate in joy and simplicity the Nativity of our Lord and in turn to become "angels", announcing the Good News to our contemporaries by sharing the Word.



Jacob's Dream (Gn 28:11-29) (Br. Karcher)

This abridged edition of BDVdigital, published at the end of 2012 both in the joy of the Christmas celebration and in the expectation of the New Year, proposes a reflection on the conclusions of the recent Synod and the role of Scripture in the New Evangelization. The Catholic Biblical Federation's message that was sent to the Synod Fathers has thus received an encouraging response (see, for example, proposition 11) and promises to challenge the Federation even more profoundly in the years to come.

That the "new beginning" of the CBF continues to gain momentum is confirmed, among other things, by the appointment of a sub-regional coordinator for North America and by the admission of still another new associate member, the Commissariat Terrae Sanctae – Indonesia, now integrated in the South East Asia sub-region. Welcome to the CBF fellowship!

The positive development in the financial situation of the Federation, including the renewed support of benefactors in Germany and the payment of membership fees by many European and North American members, has made it possible to begin the search for a part time general secretary for the period 2013-2015. The job description and qualifications are described in detail in this issue of the BDVdigital. The CBF Executive Committee and Administrative Board sincerely hope that numerous persons, committed deeply to biblical pastoral ministry, shall respond to their appeal and propose themselves as candidates for this important ministry.

Ms. Brigitte Karcher has generously allowed us to reprint a number of her linocuts that she produced for the Benedictine Archabbey of Saint Ottilien. They are inspired by biblical texts that speak of confidence, the feeling of security and love experienced by persons who encounter the living Word. These linocuts were published together meditations written by Benedictine Father Claudius Bals, director of the Retreat Center in Sankt Ottilien. May Brigitte Karcher's artistic meditations on God's Word inspire us and console us during the Christmas tide and encourage us in our common ministry in the service of His Word in the year ahead.

Thomas P. Osborne and Gérard Billon

The Encounter with the Word

Two women encounter each other on the path of life's journey: an older woman, whose life lies behind her and a young woman, whose life full of hope and expectation is just beginning. They share with other the astonishing news of unexpected adjustments and transformations that their heeding of God's Word has unleashed in their lives. It is not surprising that the two women, Elizabeth and Mary, do not understand all that God has planned for them. Their listening to the Word of God, their welcoming and pondering its meaning in their hearts have awakened life in their innermost beings and the hope of its growth. In Brigitte Karcher's linocut we catch a glimpse of the future journey of the younger woman, a journey that leads to the birth of a child, the birth of Jesus who speaks God's Word of love to humanity as he encounters men and women in the midst of human life. Prophetic, inspired by the Spirit, Mary speaks with force:

"My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord

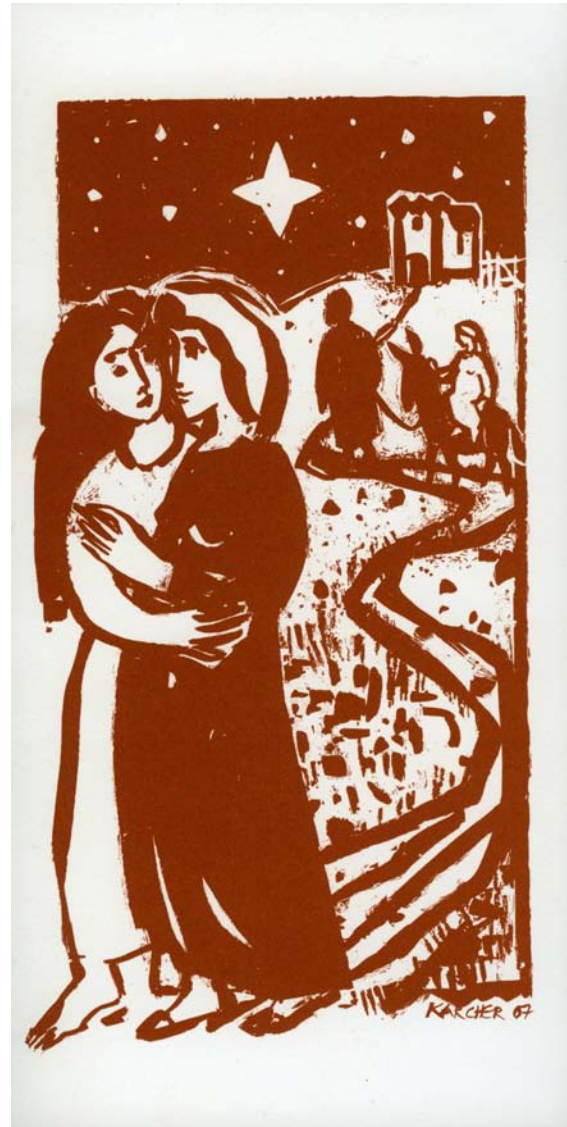
...

His mercy is from age to age to those who fear him.

He remembers his mercy which he promised to our fathers, Abraham and his descendants forever" (Lk 1,46-55).

May our encounter with the Word of God and with each other, particularly during this Christmas tide, open our hearts to the life that the Word sets free in each of us personally and in our work within the Catholic Biblical Federation. We wish all of you a joyous celebration of the Nativity and health and courage in the New Year!

*Archbishop Vincenzo Paglia,
CBF President
Bishop Telesphor Mkude,
Executive Committee Moderator
Bishop Bernhard Haßlberger,
Administrative Board Chairman
Prof. Thomas P. Osborne,
Acting General Secretary*



Every encounter bears
the seed of hope,
the trace of a path
and the star
of transformation
in itself.

Brigitte Karcher

Forum

From One Synod to the Other The Word of God and New Evangelization

† Pierre-Marie Carré

Archbishop of Montpellier

Special secretary of the synod on the new evangelization

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

Is there continuity between the two Synods of Bishops held at Rome in 2008 on the Word of God in the life and mission of the Church and in 2012 on the New Evangelization for the transmission of the Christian Faith? Without hesitation, I would answer in the affirmative. Having participated in both of these synods, I can speak here with full knowledge of the facts.

These connections are underscored broadly in the preparatory texts for the Synod of 2012. Suffice it to cite a few words of the *Lineamenta*: "...[the] decision to assign the topic of the new evangelization to the next synodal assembly is part of a unified plan which includes the recent establishment of an *ad hoc* dicastery in the Roman Curia and the publication of the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Verbum Domini*" (n. 1). Proposal n. 2 voted on by the Synod likewise makes reference to this.

It is customary at the start of a Synod for the rapporteur of the preceding Synod to deliver a report on the status of its implementation. This was the objective of the report of Cardinal Ouellet. He first of all pointed out that approximately 200,000 copies of *Verbum Domini* had been disseminated. Above all, he tried to show the evidence for the reception of this exhortation in the life of the Church: increased diffusion of the Bible, the important development of *lectio divina*, (about which he noted that it is one of the remarkable fruits of this synod), numerous pastoral initiatives to stimulate the reading of Scripture. The Cardinal also notes a growing place given to the Word of God in the liturgy (progress in homilies) and in catechesis. Already a few academic type works can be listed.

A number of theological questions of great importance were stressed by *Verbum Domini*, Cardinal Ouellet also notes. He points to the Christology of the Word (reflection on the expression "abbreviated Word", on the question of inspiration and on the relational dimension of the Word of God), the notions of performativity (that is to say, the dynamic and efficacious character of the Word, especially in the context of liturgy) and of sacramentality; finally the close link which exists between the Church and Scripture (Tradition, and the analogy of faith are the eloquent signs of this).

These observations lead to the development of the links that exist between *Verbum Domini* and the new evangelization. Already in the conclusion of his exhortation Benedict XVI wrote: "that the Holy Spirit awakes in souls a hunger and thirst for the Word of God and raises up zealous heralds and witnesses of the Gospel" (n. 122). It is on the basis of a renewed hearing leading to conversion that the new proclamation of Christ Jesus becomes possible and efficacious. It must be conducted under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit who, since the time of Pentecost, has animated and sustained the Church.

But it is not enough to say that the themes of the synods are linked. More profoundly, it is important, in the two texts voted on by the Synod, to highlight the message and the proposals, as well as the place of the Word of God.

Above all it is well to note how these documents differ in literary genre. The *message* is addressed to the People of God. It is thus a text of encouragement which presents the works of the Synod and shows the ways in which every individual is engaged in the new evangelization. It is drafted by a commission whose president and vice-president have an essential role.

The *proposals* are the fruit of the reflection of all Synod participants. Even if they are made public, they are formally addressed to the Pope with the aim of presenting to him what appears to be important in the comments of the participants, but above all in the domain of pastoral action. Coming as it does from the work done in the different language groups, it brings together perspectives from every continent, which can give the impression of a certain balancing of viewpoints. Finally, the proposals are not organized in the manner of a thesis. The order is random. The final redactor (Cardinal Wuerl), whom I assisted, did not attempt to supplement what might have been lacking. He would not have had a right to do so anyway, because his assigned task was to supply an ordered presentation of the views expressed by the members of the Synod.

The message is supported by a presentation of the narrative of Jesus' encounter with the Samaritan woman (Jn 4). In a spiritual type reading of this text, the audience is invited to enter into a personal relationship with Jesus, on the model of the experience of the Samaritan woman, and is summoned to allow others to do so as well, as was the case when the woman spoke to the inhabitants of her Samaritan town. This appears to be a particularly opportune Gospel passage for bringing to light what is at stake in the whole phenomenon of evangelization: the personal encounter with Jesus Christ.

Many other biblical references are sprinkled through the text of the message: the mention of multiple encounters of Jesus with different people and the experience of Saint Paul in particular. But in addition (§ 4), the point is made that "the frequent reading of the Sacred Scriptures – illuminated by the Tradition of the Church who hands them over to us and is their authentic interpreter – is not only necessary for knowing the very content of the Gospel, which is the person of Jesus in the context of salvation history. Reading the Scriptures also helps us to discover opportunities to encounter Jesus, truly evangelical approaches rooted in the fundamental dimensions of human life: the family, work, friendship, various forms of poverty and the trials of life...". The point is repeatedly made that in order to be able to evangelize the world, the Church must become a faithful hearer of

the Word (§ 5), because evangelization begins with a renewed conversion on the part of those who wish to be witnesses of Christ.



Jesus' Encounter with the Samaritan Woman
(B. Karcher)

The proposals likewise make reference to the Word of God. It can first of all be pointed out that the passages of the New Testament relative to the sending on mission are cited several times, in particular Matt 28:16-20 and Mk 16:9-20. One proposal (n. 11) refers directly to the prayerful reading of Scripture. Here is the text in full:

“New evangelization and the prayerful reading of Sacred Scripture

God has communicated himself to us in his Word made flesh. This divine Word, heard and celebrated in the Liturgy of the Church, particularly in the Eucharist, strengthens interiorly the faithful and renders them capable of authentic evangelical witness in daily life. The Synod Fathers desire that the divine word “be ever more fully at the heart of every ecclesial activity” (*Verbum Domini*, 1). The gate to Sacred Scripture should be open to all believers. In the context of the New Evangelization every opportunity for the study of Sacred Scripture should be made available. The Scripture should permeate homilies, catechesis and every effort to pass on the faith. In consideration of the necessity of familiarity with the Word of God for the New Evangelization and for the spiritual growth of the faithful, the Synod encourages dioceses, parishes, small Christian communities to continue serious study of the Bible and *Lectio Divina* — the prayerful reading of the Scriptures (cf. *Dei Verbum*, nn. 21-22).”

God has spoken to mankind. He has made himself known. The Synod takes the lead in reflecting on this mystery. The question posed today consists in discovering ways in which this Good News can reach men and women of today.

Pentecost revealed that the Spirit of God was to lead the Church and give her the capacity to address every individual in his own language, to declare the wonderful deeds that God accomplishes for humanity. The Holy Spirit continues to act in a variety of ways, both with the evangelizers, giving them the necessary fervor and the capacities to discover how best to confess the Faith, and with those who hear them as well, so much so that Saint Paul was able to write: “no one can say ‘Jesus is Lord’ except by the Holy Spirit” (1 Cor 12:3).

It was not possible for the members of the Synod to rewrite a theology of evangelization, nor even to conduct a study of the major biblical texts. Excellent works already exist in this regard! The Synod wished above all to exhort the members of the Church to return to what is the essence of the Faith and its proclamation in the context of today.

- As the initial preaching of Jesus expressed it (cf. Mk 1:14-15), each of the faithful is invited to a profound conversion, which is to be understood in its different dimensions: moral, spiritual and pastoral. In a word, today more than ever, Christ must be at the center!
- In the mission sending scene according to Matt 28: 16-20, Jesus demands: “make disciples of all nations, baptizing them....”. The Synod wanted to underscore emphatically the spiritual journey that the catechumenate and the sacraments of initiation represent. There is much to be done so that these sacraments can truly structure each of the baptized in the life of faith.
- The First Letter of Peter (3:15) calls on us to be able to render an account of the hopes that are in us. This text was alluded to at the time of many of the interventions, in particular in order to underscore the need for solid and simple supports for presenting the Christian Faith in the face of objections that are commonly heard. So, a simple form of apologetics is very much desired.

The reflections of the Synod constitute as it were a chord made up of many strands woven together. The brevity of time allotted to its work does not permit a detailed study of the various questions, but it is important to note the most important of these while noting the place the Word of God can occupy in each of these points.

- The kerygmatic proclamation of the central message of the Christian Faith: Jesus is risen! He is the Savior of the world, the Son of God. Many expressions of faith found in the Acts

of the Apostles render testimony to this. It is important today to formulate these truths in a compelling way, with reference to both personal and communal experience.

- The spiritual, liturgical and sacramental dimension of the Faith. This leads to a veritable communion with Christ. I would add that the sacraments of Christian initiation and that of penance and reconciliation were most particularly cited. In speaking of the sacraments, the Synod does not limit itself to their celebration, but focuses on the preparation and the follow-up given to the sacraments, in particular the entire span of mystagogic instruction.
- In the conditions of today, a solid formation is required. Such a formation is addressed to each individual with appropriate adaptations: to children, to young people and to adults. This formation likewise assigns an eminent place to the Word of God which must be known and well interpreted, including with reference to questions regarding the relations between science and faith.

The Word of God is called to be at the center of these domains of the Church's activity because it enlightens and nourishes. As the Synod on the Word of God expressed it, it is not something that stands apart; rather the living Word is that which irrigates the whole of pastoral ministry.



Jesus' Encounter with Mary and Martha (Br. Karcher)

**Message of the Catholic Biblical Federation
to the Synod of Bishops
on “The New Evangelization
for the Transmission of the Christian Faith”**

1. The Catholic Biblical Federation and its Commitment to Evangelization

The Catholic Biblical Federation (CBF) has been reflecting on the question of “New Evangelization” at least since its Fourth Plenary Assembly held in Bogotá, Colombia in 1990, now more than 20 years ago. In response to Pope John Paul II’s call for a new evangelization, the CBF assembly focused its discussion on “The Bible in the New Evangelization”. Indeed, in line with the Federation’s reference text, the Vatican II Constitution on Revelation “*Dei Verbum*”, the assembly delegates were convinced that “the biblical apostolate is an important aspect of the New Evangelization since ‘All the preaching of the Church, like the Christian religion itself, must be nourished and directed by the Holy Scriptures’ (DV 21)” (Bogotá Final Statement, § 4,2). This intuition has been confirmed and reinforced during the following years of the CBF’s commitment to “biblical apostolate”, to “biblical pastoral ministry” and to “the biblical animation of all pastoral life of the Church”, an expression which appeared in CBF publications as early as 1993 and which has been adopted in Pope Benedict XVI’s post-synodal apostolic exhortation *Verbum Domini* (VD 73). It is in this context that the CBF would like to share its experience, its reflection and its concerns with the Synod Fathers on the not only important role but the essential role of the reading of Scripture within the global dynamics both of “evangelization” and of “new evangelization”.

2. Evangelization as a Journey in Dialogue between the Scriptures and the Vicissitudes of Human Life

We are extremely grateful for the clarification that the *Instrumentum laboris* provides for the various understandings of the terms “evangelization” and “new evangelization” and the analysis of the multi-faceted reasons for the renewal of the efforts for the transmission of the Christian faith. The CBF has experienced its work of “evangelization” over the years as a sharing of the “Good News” of God’s liberating and healing Word with our brothers and sisters in today’s world. This Word expresses itself in the dialogue between the Scriptures and the narratives of life’s journey that we heed in our groups. It has been our experience that evangelization is itself a journey which is never completed: it requires attentive listening both to the Scriptures and to the concrete, often tortuous stories of concrete men and women, with their hopes and deceptions, experience of success and of failure, moments of sadness and of joy ... It is in this journeying together and in the sharing of the substance of our lives with each other that we can discover in the sharing of the Word the healing and consoling presence of the Lord among us ... and that is indeed “Good News”! This journey, accompanied by the presence of the Lord, as in the narrative of the disciples of Emmaus, leads us to strengthen the bonds of faith, hope and solidarity which unite us; it requires respectful patience and endurance, an open ear and a humble heart filled with mercy and understanding.

The Gospels themselves give us many examples of the presence of Jesus with the men and women of his day, as he shared with them the Good News of the coming of God’s Kingdom in the midst of their lives. His compassion with the sick and the possessed, with those whom the civil and religious societies marginalized, his way of speaking with them and teaching those who listened to him, his message of consolation and his call for conversion ... are the permanent guides for our own participation in the ministry of proclaiming the Good News and opening the Kingdom to all men and women of good will. The narratives of the encounters between Jesus and the men, women and children of his day provide us with stimulating stories that might help us give

concrete form to the personal encounters of men, women and children of our time with the risen Lord. His care for those sharing in his ministry is particularly significant: he sends them two by two, he is attentive to their hunger and provides them with a place for resting and sharing the joys and difficulties of their mission, he questions their preconceived ideas and convictions, he calls the disciples themselves to be transformed by the Good News which they announce ...

The letters of Paul and the Acts of the Apostles furnish a source of both theological reflection on and narratives of the proclamation of the *kerygma* in the Jewish, Greek and Roman society of the Mediterranean world. It is of utmost interest to note how the interaction between the evangelizer and the culturally varied audiences manifest both the fundamental stability of the *kerygma* and the development of the forms of expression of the faith and of the life of the communities.

3. Evangelization and the Encounter with Jesus Christ imply an in depth contact with the Scriptures

Saint Jerome put it quite succinctly: “Ignorantia Scripturae ignorantia Christi”: we cannot know Jesus Christ without knowing the Scriptures. It was in this optic that Dei Verbum set the clear option of making the Scriptures directly accessible to all the faithful, while insisting both on the importance of understanding the Scriptures as they were meant to be understood by their authors and the recognition that they are to be a source of nourishment for the faithful. In a similar vein, Dei Verbum speaks of the Scriptures as the “soul” of theology. Logically, then, if one of the most important goals of (new) evangelization is the personal encounter with Jesus Christ, this implies necessarily the regular contact and growing familiarity with the Scriptures. This contact must transcend a fragmentary and oftentimes “instrumentalized” reference to the Scriptures, moving on to the repeated reading “from the beginning to the end” of biblical writings and then progressively to the full “canonical” reading of the entire Bible.

We know Jesus through the four canonical Gospels: four differently inculturated approaches leading to the encounter with the Risen Lord and to the hearing of the message of God’s love for humanity that he proclaims. Jesus has his human and religious origin in the Jewish people whose culture was formed primarily by the Jewish Scriptures (our Old Testament). His message was heard by and shared among men and women whose story of discipleship we find attested in the New Testament writings as well. All of these Scriptures find their center, their focus and their fulfillment in Jesus of Nazareth, the Christ and the Son of God, according to the Christian tradition.

Our experience within the work of the CBF has recognized the wide reaching truth of St. Jerome’s intuition. And we are convinced that all efforts of evangelization must make this direct contact with the Scriptures possible and that people like Philip in the Acts of the Apostles chapter 8 must be ready, willing and able to accompany those whose search for meaning in their lives passes through the reading and understanding of the Scriptures.



Abraham, Sara and the Three Visitors at Mamre (Br. Karcher)

4. The Journey of Life and of Faith within the Scriptures

Even though the Scriptures comprise a multitude of literary forms, the predominant form is that of the narrative of the life journey which individuals, groups of persons and even an entire people undertake, in dialogue with God's Word. One needs only to call to mind the Old Testament narratives of Abraham and his family, of Jacob and his family, of the people of Israel journeying from Canaan to Egypt and then from Egyptian slavery through the desert and then on to the land of the promise ... or again the narrative of this same people, journeying from the Holy City Jerusalem, after its destruction by the Babylonian armies, into exile, and then after their liberation, their return to the challenge of rebuilding city, temple and country in difficult circumstances. These and many other Old Testament narratives are characterized by everything which makes life a burden and a joy, by the failures and success of human enterprise, by great deeds of righteousness and by miserable unfaithfulness and sin, by the violence and injustice which so often mark the tragedy of human life as well as by human love and commitment for the poor and the weak ... these human journeys through life are transformed into journeys which engender faith through the divine word which suddenly and without warning interrupts into human history.

Men and women perceive this Word as a sort of “compass” that shows them the way to new pastures, that provides orientation in times of disarray, that opens the breach to a community in which persons may live in mutual respect ... This Word is perceived as an interrogation and as a call to conversion as well as a signpost pointing to the liberation from dead ends, but also as consolation and encouragement addressed to those at the end of their means and wits. The New Testament as well is profoundly marked by journeys of discipleship, not only in individual episodes of the Gospels or the Acts, but also in each Gospel or in Luke-Acts, taken as a whole. Paul’s ministry is presented in the form of missionary journeys, accompanied by the epistolary pastoral care and at the same time the development of his “theology”.

The regular calling to mind of these “narratives” of human journeys and the signs of God’s presence within them is the object not only of the biblical narratives themselves but also of certain psalms or other texts which in one way or another reformulate the journey of individuals or of a people with God across the years. Progressively, this repetition and meditation on one’s past creates a place in the memory of the faithful, a “reference” narrative, with which a person and a community can dialogue in evaluating and guiding ones personal journey through life. In this way, the Scriptures themselves teach us essential catechetical methods: here, the importance of developing a personal knowledge and consciousness of the Biblical narratives as life and faith journeys.

5. Life’s Journey with the Word as a “mirror” and as a “compass”

One of the great challenges of pastoral care today is helping people to become conscious of their own “story”, of their own journey through life, assisting them in keeping alive their memory of the journey that they have made individually, as a family or as a community. The globalized society robs individuals, groups and peoples of their “memory”; it creates “common” needs that may be satisfied by common “products”. The process of revivifying ones memory, ones consciousness of ones culture and story, is essential for an evangelization that is not content with the creation of “socialized” Christian Catholics but that seeks to transmit faith which truly takes root within persons and their culture.

The engendering of faith presupposes that the life journey of individual persons is taken seriously and treated with great respect and discretion. The narrative of human life can look to the Scriptural narrative as to a mirror, helping to view ones life with a certain distance. The Scriptures can question certain decisions that a person has made on his life’s journey. They can provide a compass for showing the direction, even though each person must seek the concrete way that his journey follows. They can help a person recognize, accept and transcend personal moments of traumatic experience and even failure, by placing them within the vast story of the journey of God with his people across the ages.

In this context, a double discernment is necessary, both of human life and of the biblical message. This intuition warns us against a naïve and simplistic relation between life and Scripture in which some seek in the Scriptures the immediate response to questions that arise in human life. Sometimes, it is more than sufficient that the Scriptures help in identifying the essential questions ... The dialogue between life and Scripture requires great sensitivity, humility and patience – all qualities necessary for giving birth both to human beings and to faith. Clearly, it is only with the help of the Spirit who is the source of inspiration of Scripture and who teaches us discernment, humility and patience that this dialogue is possible.



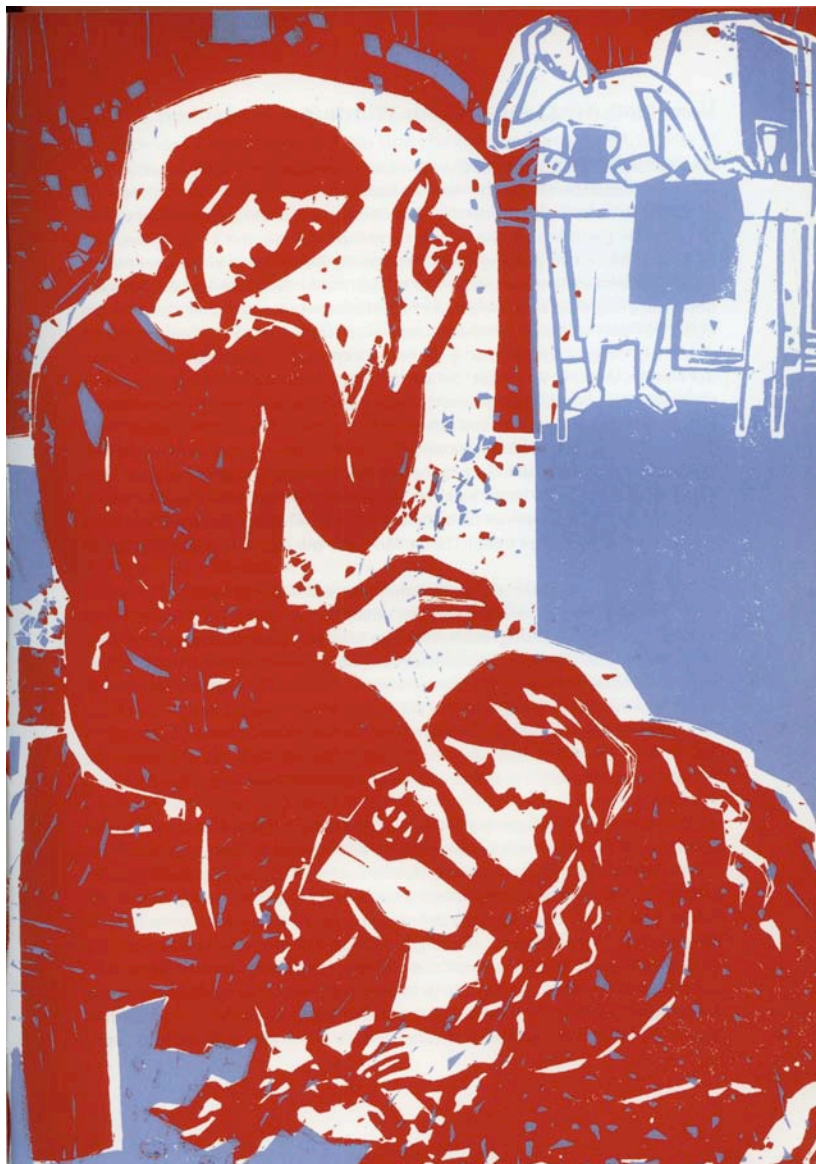
“Stay with us, for it is nearly evening and the day is almost over” (Lk 24:29) (Br. Karcher)

6. Faith formation goes “hand in hand” with the Reading of the Scriptures

Recent studies of Luke’s Gospel and of the Acts of the Apostles have revealed to us the particular catechetical journey upon which Jesus’ disciples, both men and women, embark with the master. They must learn, step by step, to listen – to the Word of God, whether in Jesus’ teaching or in the Scriptures, and to the human voices which interpolate them–, they must learn the meaning of the passion, death and resurrection of Jesus and the implications for their own lives and commitments, they must learn to participate in the mission of healing and announcing the Gospel of Peace, they must experience conversion in their own lives, they must learn to pray and to share their possessions with the less fortunate and to live in solidarity with the members of the faith community and beyond, they must learn that listening to the word and service (*diakonia*) belong together: that hearing the word leads to service and that service which is not grounded in the hearing of the Word leads to dispersion and worrisome activity ... The last stage of this formation journey is marked by the opening of the disciples’ intelligence to the understanding of the Scriptures and their meaning not only for their faith but also for their lives. With

the accomplishment of their formation and the gift of the Spirit in the Pentecost scene in the Acts, the disciples are then ready to assume ultimately the mission of “evangelization”, of sharing the Good News of the coming of God’s Kingdom and the gift of conversion for the forgiveness of sins with peoples of all nations in the accomplishment of God’s promise to Abraham.

It is our conviction in the CBF that evangelization and the transmission of Christian faith goes “hand in hand” with the reading of the Scriptures. It is through frequent contact with the Scriptures that we learn the “language” of faith. Biblical language is evocative, making rich use of symbols that invite the reader to search for the divine reality and its orientation (Torah) for human life that surpass not only each image but all images which we may use in attempting to speak of God. This evocative, symbolic language is multi-faceted and invites the believer to enter progressively into the depth and richness of the faith relationship with a believing community and ultimately with God. Biblical language is also provocative, in that it invites the reader or hearer of the Word to enter into the story personally and actively, to take position and to open oneself to conversion.



„You did not give me water for my feet,
but she has bathed them with her tears and wiped them with her hair.” (Lk 7:44) (Br. Karcher)

Biblical language is first and foremost narrative, recounting the story of the relationship between the people and God. The repetition of this “story” both in the basic narrative and in summary forms is characteristic of biblical faith formation. To this extent, the believer is invited repeatedly to understand his or her own personal life journey within the context of the collective journey of God’s people. The progressive development of the consciousness of belonging to a family or a group, with its particular identity, with its history, its language and its values, is fundamental to the dynamics of evangelization. In a society in which individuality and individualism are, on the one hand, proclaimed as the ultimate liberation with regard to cultural, ethnic, national and religious roots, and, on the other hand, sacrificed to globalized marketing strategies, the transmission of faith and evangelization is faced with far-reaching challenges. In any event, the efforts of sharing the Gospel must not neglect making the long and patient journey with concrete men and women with their particular life stories and bringing these persons into dialogue with the Jewish-Christian Scriptures. Indeed, our experience over the years in the CBF has been that shared Scripture reading can lead progressively to the building up of the community of Christians, of the body of Christ itself.

At one time or another during this dialogue, the expression of faith may also take the form of creedal affirmation and commitment. The Christian creedal formulations, certainly the expression of the *depositum fidei*, receive new vibrancy when they can be perceived as the crystallization of the Church’s faith, the fruit of the community’s commitment in the life of the world and constituent of the community’s identity and cohesion.

7. The Evangelization of the Evangelizers

Clearly, those who participate actively in the efforts of evangelization can only be witnesses of the God’s Word when they themselves have experienced profoundly the Good News of Salvation in their own lives. Otherwise, they are likely to remain mere “functionaries”. Witnesses of God’s love for humanity in Jesus Christ must be in regular contact with the Scriptures, in their depth and in their breadth. This contact leads to familiarity and even to love of the biblical text that reveals God’s Word to us, when we heed it in prayer and respond to it with commitment. But these witnesses have also to develop this sensitivity and respect of the human beings whom they encounter and with whom they are called to journey together. This double attentiveness and respect challenges us to examine critically, in particular, our way of reading Scripture.

The sixth CBF Plenary Assembly, held in Lebanon in 2002, invited the CBF delegates to reflect upon their “use” of the Scriptures, notably in keeping with the Abrahamic call to become a “blessing for all Nations”. In dialogue with the Pontifical Biblical Commission’s document on “The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church” (1993), it recognized options intent on setting free the transforming power of the Word, options which the Scriptures themselves teach us:

- We are committed to **an attentive and respectful reading** of the biblical text. Being a book of a different time and culture, it must first of all be respected in its otherness. It is to be read in its original – historical and cultural – as well as in its literary context. “Our reading of the Bible should enable the people to discover the true content. All efforts to interpret the Bible in order to justify political and ideological positions should be considered as a betrayal to the message” (Bogotá 7,3). Even people who are not able to handle scientific and scholarly methods can be guided in an attentive reading of the Bible, and this in order to avoid the pitfalls of a fundamentalist reading which refuses to take into consideration a historical and pluralistic character of the Bible (Pontifical Biblical Commission, The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church [IBC], I.F).
- The Bible, in its canon as well as individual books, is a pluralistic phenomenon, an outstanding example of unity in diversity, a symphony of many voices. Convinced that “all the different ways of reading the Bible are not equally apt” (Bogotá 7) but also that no one method captures the richness of the meaning of the Scriptures, the Federation advocates a **plurality of methods and approaches** which “contribute effectively to the task of making more available the riches contained in the biblical text” (IBC Introduction).
- Reading the Bible and celebrating the Word **in community**: The Bible is the book of the community, an expression of its faith experience, and meant for building it. It has an important place in the

liturgy and in catechesis. “The Scriptures, as given to the Church, are the communal treasure of the entire body of believers”. “All the members of the Church have a role in the interpretation of Scripture”. Even those who, “in their powerlessness and lack of human resources find themselves forced to put their trust in God alone and in his justice, have a capacity for hearing and interpreting the Word of God which should be taken into account by the whole Church” (IBC, III.B.3).

- Reading Scripture in the **life context**: The Bible is the book of life in as much as it deals with life in all its manifestations. God has given us two sacred books: that of creation and history, and that of the Bible. God’s Word enshrined in the latter is to throw light on and help us decipher the first. The Bible has “to be re-read in the light of new circumstances and applied to the contemporary situation of the people of God” (IBC, IV.A).

- Mindful of the different contexts and cultures in which we live and having reflected on how the Word of God has been received in different cultures, we are convinced that we not only have to pay attention to the Word itself, but also to the different soils in which it is to be sown. The conviction that the Word is capable of being spread in other cultures “springs from the Bible itself ... in the blessing promised to all peoples through Abraham and his offspring” (Gen 12:3; 18:18) and extending it to all nations (cf. IBC, IV.B). An “**inculturated**” reading presupposes a respectful and in-depth encounter with a people and its culture and starts with the translation of the Bible into the language of the people, to be followed by interpretation which then leads to the formation of a “local Christian culture, extending to all aspects of life” (IBC, IV.B).

- The poor are the first addressees of the Good News (Lk 4:18-19; Mt 5:3). What God has hidden from the wise and learned, He has revealed to the little ones, to those of little or no significance (Mt 11:25). This fact demands that Christian communities read **the Bible from the perspective of the poor**.

- The Bible as Word of God can only be welcomed if we approach it also as the Church’s basic source of prayer and if we cultivate the **prayerful reading of Scripture (Lectio divina)** ... This form of prayer challenges, gives orientation to and forms our existence.¹

One might say that the CBF has recognized the necessity of evangelizing our own way of reading the Scriptures that has so often been subjected to fragmentary interpretation and articulated in such a way that the biblical texts are used as a pretext to support our own theological, moral, social or other purposes.



Jesus' Encounter with Zacchaeus (Lk 19:1-10) (Br. Karcher)

¹ “The Word of God: A Blessing for all Nations: Final Statement of the Sixth Plenary Assembly”, Bulletin Dei Verbum [English Edition] N° 64/65 (2002, 3-4), p. 9-16.

8. "*Biblica animatio totius actionis pastoralis*"

Pope Benedict XVI expressed a fundamental desire at the very beginning of his apostolic exhortation *Verbum Domini*:

"I wish to point out certain fundamental approaches to a rediscovery of God's word in the life of the Church as a wellspring of constant renewal. At the same time I express my hope that the word will be ever more fully at the heart of every ecclesial activity" (VD § 1).

The Holy Father returns to this fundamental intuition later in the same document:

"the Synod called for a particular pastoral commitment to emphasizing the centrality of the word of God in the Church's life, and recommended a greater 'biblical apostolate', not alongside other forms of pastoral work, but as *a means of letting the Bible inspire all pastoral work*" (VD 73).

The Latin expression "*Biblica animatio totius actionis pastoralis*" is difficult to translate into non-Latin languages in which it loses some of its original force. The symbolism of the biblical and fundamentally human language can help us to better understand what is meant. Scripture is the leaven that permeates the flower and transforms it into living dough, capable of providing nourishment for human beings. Scripture is the salt that mingles with aliments, giving them taste and conserving them for human consumption. Scripture is, to a certain extent the sap that gives life to entire plants, transforming the inanimate wood into life and fruit bearing branches. *Dei Verbum* speaks of the Scriptures as the soul (*anima*) of theology (DV 24). In philosophical and theological language, the soul is the principle of life. It gives life and dynamism to the body, from within the organism. In this way, "*biblica animatio*" is not only one sector of the pastoral activity of the Church nor is it merely an inspiring model for pastoral activity, but it is that divine force present in God's Word which breathes life into the entire Church, in all of its life and mission.

The implications of this intuition are far-reaching. All pastoral planning and activities should be illuminated and guided by a deep scriptural reflection and discernment. All ministers and members of the faithful should be formed, through a regular, in depth and prayerful contact with the Scriptures. This Word – the Scriptural Word of God – when sown into receptive earth shall produce rich fruit, even though the obstacles are not negligible.

- In this light, the CBF considers that it is of utmost importance that the Synod of Bishops on "The New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Christian Faith" also reflect upon the place of the reading of Scripture in its efforts in favor of (new) evangelization and the transmission of faith, and this in direct line with the conclusions of the Synod of Bishops on "The Word of God in the Life and Mission of the Church" and Pope Benedict XVI's Apostolic Exhortation *Verbum Domini*.

- We recognize in the Scriptures not only the Lord's command to announce the Good News to all mankind, but also numerous models of "evangelization" which lead to the personal encounter with the Risen Lord and to the healing and conversion which the hearing of the message of God's love awakens within us.

- We think that the direct contact between the faithful and the Scriptures is one of the primary forms of evangelization and merits the commitment of the entire Christian community. This contact should be allowed to grow into a respectful dialogue between the Scriptures and the real life situation of the readers, in which the Scriptures can play the role both of mirror and of compass.

- The formation of "ministers of the Word" possessing a deep understanding of the Scriptures and capable of journeying respectfully with men and women, youth and children is essential.

- Adequate forms of and material for Bible sharing within families should become a priority of our reflection, development and implementation in our Christian communities.

- The contact with the Scripture can take multiple forms and should respect the cultural forms and individual capacities of the various members of the human family. Reflection should be undertaken concerning the use of modern communications without neglecting the simple forms of human expression, as has been experienced for example in "bibliodrama".

- The traditional catechetical materials should deepen their Scriptural reference (not only in a fragmentary reference, but in a dynamic way in keeping with the narratives with which the Bible provides us).

- The elaboration of an anthology of basic biblical texts, accompanied by simple and motivating

commentaries, might be of help to various age groups and cultural settings. But here again, the editorial, exegetical and catechetical options need to be discussed in detail, so that the reading of individual passages leads progressively to the reading of essential biblical books in their entirety and to the reading of the Bible as a whole.

- Sufficient reflection should be devoted to the role of the Scriptures and the dialogue with human life in liturgical homilies and other forms of exhortation and instruction, as well as to the necessary formation in this regard.

- The forms and quality of the proclamation of the Word deserve both serious reflection and well planned formation programs.

- We humbly suggest that reflection on the reading of Scripture in the life of the Church in all of its dimensions merits the statute of a "locus theologicus" in the articulation of theological reflection and research and thereby plead in this regard for the creation of courses and research circles devoted to "the Reading of Scripture in the life of the Church" within the theological curricula in our Faculties and Institutes.

...

These are just a few of the concrete propositions upon which the Catholic Biblical Federation would like to insist and which it commits itself to further in its work across the world. In this regard, the CBF is extremely grateful for Pope Benedict's *Verbum Domini* that has quite broadly indicated the fields of reflection and of pastoral planning in this regard. Indeed, the Holy Father has given us the "compass" for our work as a Federation in its task of opening the treasures of God's Word to all our brothers and sisters.

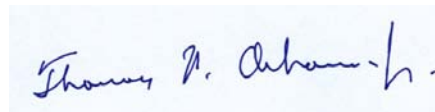
* * *

Dear Bishops present at the Synod! Please accept these reflections as a sign of the prayer and support that the Catholic Biblical Federation humbly offers to you during your deliberations. We are certainly aware of the complexity of the topics that you are discussing and of their vital importance for the life of the Church. If we share with you our experience and the reflections that we have formulated on the basis of our ministry of sharing God's Word over the past four decades, then it is a sign of our continuing commitment to the mission with which the Federation was entrusted by Pope Paul VI, together with Cardinals Bea and Willebrands, in the aftermath of the Council and in line with the orientations provided by chapter 6 of *Dei Verbum* and which Pope Benedict has reinforced in *Verbum Domini* following up on the previous Bishops Synod in 2008.

For the Catholic Biblical Federation



Archbishop Vincenzo Paglia
CBF President
President of the Pontifical Council for the Family



Thomas P. Osborne
CBF Acting General Secretary
D-86941 Sankt Ottilien

The Solemnity of the Assumption

August 15, 2012

Federation News

The Catholic Biblical Federation is searching for a General Secretary for 2013-2015

Job description:

The Catholic Biblical Federation is searching for a General Secretary (m/f) who shall to be at the service of the networking of its some 90 full members and 200 associate members active in Biblical Pastoral Ministry across the world, in line with the global objectives of the CBF as expressed in the constitution. The General Secretary works under the direction of the CBF Executive Committee in close collaboration with the CBF Administrative Board and the regional and sub-regional coordinators. The General Secretariat is located in Sankt Ottilien in Bavaria near Munich.

Qualifications:

The potential candidate for this position shall have completed theological studies with an additional specialization (licentiate or doctorate) in Sacred Scripture or in Biblical Theology at a Roman Catholic University and have academic and biblical pastoral experience.

This person shall master at least three of the four official CBF languages (English, French, German and Spanish). A working command of both English and German is in any event a necessity. A working knowledge of Italian is considered to be an advantage.

The ideal candidate shall also be competent in administrative and organizational matters, have experience in publishing and master the necessary computer software.

Responsibilities and Tasks:

- Responsibility for the development, administration and organization of the General Secretariat
- Responsibility for networking among CBF members
- Responsibility for development of the biblical pastoral ministry within the global Church
- Responsibility for CBF publications
- Responsibility for the implementation of a wide based and diversified fund raising strategy
- Responsibility for the preparation and organization of the next Plenary Assembly (scheduled for 2015).

Projected term of office: three years, renewable

Part time: initially 50%

Remuneration: The salary shall be determined on the basis of the qualifications of the candidate accepted by the CBF Executive Committee in close consultation with the Administrative Board.

The interested candidate shall forward a motivated letter of interest and a detailed curriculum vitae, including a bibliography of his or her biblical exegetical and pastoral publications by email to the Catholic Biblical Federation, General Secretariat, gensec@c-b-f.org by January 31, 2013. A first selection shall be made on the basis of the written applications. The recruitment process shall continue until the position is filled. The new General Secretary shall take office as soon as possible.

Search committee (commissioned by the Executive Committee): Don Cesare Bissoli (EC Vice Moderator), Auxiliary Bishop Dr. Bernhard Haßlberger (AB Chairman), Prelate Dr. Bertram Meier (AB Vice Chairman).

Catholic Biblical Federation, General Secretariat, D-86941 Sankt Ottilien
Email: gensec@c-b-f.org, FAX +49 6552 99 11 706



**Father Arnold Jurgens, mhh
(1929-2012)
CBF General Secretary 1978-1984
Requiescat in pace**

The CBF welcomes a new associate member from Indonesia!

Commissariat Terrae Sanctae - Indoesia

Contact persons: Fr. Robert Wowor OFM , Mr. Jeffrey Joseph Hanussa

Email: robert.wowor@yahoo.com, jeffhehanussa@yahoo.com

Website: www.fransiskan-corner.org

Subregion: South East Asia

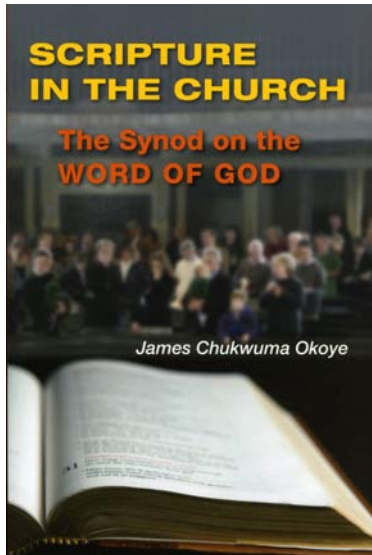
A New Subregional Coordinator for North America

The Executive Committee has recently appointed Ms. Mary Elizabeth Sperry as coordinator for the North America Subregion.

Ms. Sperry is the delegate of the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, the organization that the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops has designated as the Full Member of the CBF. She is responsible in particular for the Revised Edition of the New American Bible, which was published in 2011.



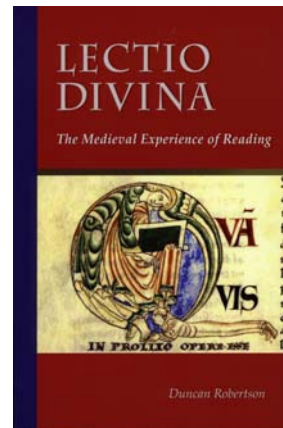
Biblical Pastoral Publications



James Chukwuma Okoye, CSSp
Scripture in the Church : The Synod on the Word of God. – Collegeville, Minnesota : Liturgical Press, 2011. – 191 p. – USD 24.95.
 – ISBN 978-0-8146-5761-4. – Orders : www.litpress.org.

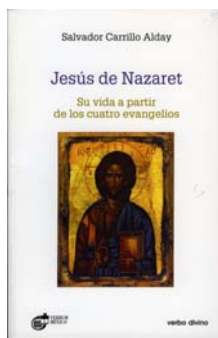
Who should read the Bible? What is the biblical word? How is Scripture to be interpreted? How is it to be prayed and lived? How does Scripture call forth Church's entire life and mission? In October 2008 the Synod on the Word of God in the Life and Mission of the Church took place in Rome. During the synod, the bishops addressed these questions on the significance of the live and mission of the church. Beginning with a helpful explanation of the synod process, James Chukwuma Okoye, Carroll Stuhmueller Professor of Old Testament at Catholic Theological Union, Chicago, follows the synod in historical progress, highlighting important topics and issues along the way and concluding with an exposition of the post-synodal apostolic exhortation *Verbum Domini*, which Benedict XVI signed on September 30, 2010. Okoye emphasizes that the Synod on the Word of God was not just about Scripture's function in the pastoral life of the Church but "also about tradition

and God's continuing self-disclosure in history and in the religions and cultures of humankind."



Duncan Robertson
Lectio Divina : The Medieval Experience of Reading. – Collegeville, Minnesota : Liturgical Press, 2011. – (Cistercian Studies Series ; 238). – ISBN 978-0-87907-238-4. – USD 34.95

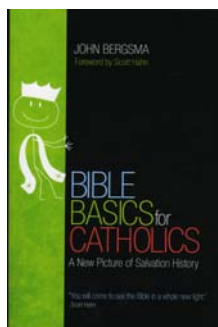
During the Middle ages the act of reading was experienced intensively in the monastic exercise of *lectio divina* – the prayerful scrutiny of passages of Scripture, "savored" in meditation, memorized, recited and rediscovered in the reader's own religious life. The rich literary tradition that arose from this culture includes theoretical writings from the *Conferences* of John Cassian (fifth century) through the twelfth-century treatises of Hugh of St. Victor and the Carthusian Guigo II; it also includes compilations, literary meditations and scriptural commentary, notably on the Song of Songs. This study brings medievalist research together with modern theoretical reflections on the act of reading in a consolidation of historical scholarship, spirituality and literary criticism. Duncan Robertson has taught French and Latin, language and literature, at Augusta State University since 1990.



Salvador Carrillo Alday, MSpS

Jesús de Nazaret : Su vida a partir de los cuatro evangelios. – Estella, Spain: Editorial Verbi Divino; Verbum Mexico, 2011. – 292 p. – ISBN 978-84-8169-733-9.

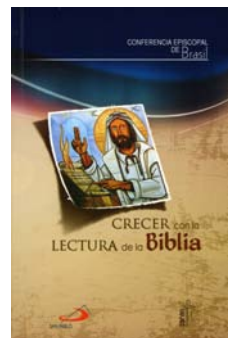
On the basis of the four Gospels this publication presents the person of Jesus of Nazareth under three fundamental stages: his infancy; his public ministry, from his baptism in the Jordan to his final days in Jerusalem; his great Passover, from the final meal with his disciples to his heavenly glorification, culminating with the sending of the Spirit at Pentecost. Father Salvador Carrillo Alday, Holy Spirit missionary in Mexico, presents the founded conclusions of specialized Biblical scholarship in a language understandable for lay persons who seek to know the treasures of the Word of God.



John Bergsma

Bible Basics for Catholics : A New Picture of Salvation History. – Notre Dame, IND: ave Maria Press, 2012. – 180 p. – ISBN 978-1-59471-291-3.

Two-time teacher of the year at the Franciscan University of Steubenville, Ohio, John Bergsma presents a fresh, fun and authentically Catholic introduction to the “big picture” of salvation history.



Conferencia Episcopal de Brasil

Crecer con la lectura de la Biblia. – Bogotá: CELAM : San Pablo, 2010. – (Animación bíblica). – 95 p. – ISBN 978-958-715-522-8.



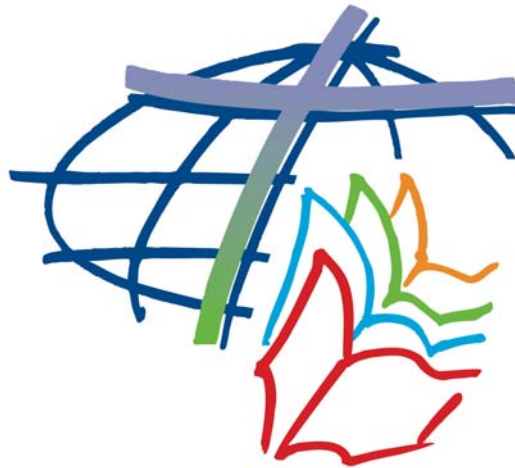
Santiago Silva Retamales

La animación bíblica de la pastoral : Su identidad y misión. – Bogotá: CELAM : San Pablo, 2010. – (Animación bíblica). – 46 p. – ISBN 978-958-715-437-5.

Gabriel Naranjo Salazar

De la pastoral bíblica a la animación bíblica de la pastoral. – Bogotá: CELAM : San Pablo, 2010. – (Animación bíblica). – 47 p. – ISBN 978-958-715-327-9.

The final document of the 5th General Conference of the Latin American Bishops' Conference (CELAM), held in Aparecida in 2007, constitutes a major milestone in the new understanding of the biblical pastoral ministry as the biblical “animation” or inspiration of all areas of the pastoral life of the Church. These three pamphlets present the Aparecida Document, trace the history of this evolution within the Catholic Biblical Federation and the Latin American Church and provide a profound reflection on and strategic plan for the deepening of the knowledge of God's Word in today's world.



Catholic Biblical Federation
Fédération Biblique Catholique
Federación Bíblica Católica
Katholische Bibelföderation

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. The first Christians saw their missionary preaching as a necessity rooted in the very nature of faith: the God in whom they believed was the God of all, the one true God who revealed himself in Israel's history and ultimately in his Son, who thus provided the response which, in their inmost being, all men and women awaited. The first Christian communities felt that their faith was not part of a particular cultural tradition, differing from one people to another, but belonged instead to the realm of truth, which concerns everyone equally.

Once more it is Saint Paul who, by his life, illustrates the meaning of the Christian mission and its fundamental universality. We can think here of the episode related in the *Acts of the Apostles* about the Athenian Areopagus (cf. 17:16-34). The Apostle of the Nations enters into dialogue with people of various cultures precisely because he is conscious that the mystery of God, Known yet Unknown, which every man and woman perceives, however confusedly, has really been revealed in history: "What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you" (*Acts* 17:23). In fact, the newness of Christian proclamation is that we can tell all peoples: "God has shown himself. In person. And now the way to him is open. The novelty of the Christian message does not consist in an idea but in a fact: God has revealed himself" (*Verbum Domini* 92).