

World Catholic Federation for the Biblical Apostolate

N° 8

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Bulletin

*Sei
verbum*

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The World Catholic Federation for the Biblical Apostolate (WCFBA) is an international fellowship of Catholic organizations involved in biblical pastoral work. The members foster mutual service among all local churches.

Translation and distribution of Catholic and inter-confessional editions of the Bible in simple language, in cooperation with bible societies throughout the world, is part of this service.

Furthermore, it is the intention of the WCFBA to promote biblical studies, support the production of pedagogical aids for a better understanding of biblical texts, and assist in the formation of ministers of the Word, such as biblical animators, lectors and catechists, suggesting ways to form bible groups and recommending the use of both mass and group media to facilitate their encounter with the Word.

The Federation also wishes to promote a dialogue with people who believe only in human values, as well as to encourage an encounter with the sacred writings of other religions. Through such encounters, the revealed Word of God can offer a more profound understanding of God and of human life.

The Federation appeals to everyone to add their personal and community support to those great tasks.

+ Alberto Ablondi, Bishop of Livorno
Président of the WCFBA

"Easy access to Sacred Scripture should be provided for all the Christian faithful"
(*Dei Verbum*, 22).

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EDITORIAL

"The Biblical Apostolate must be an integral part of our entire pastoral work of the national, regional, diocesan and local level." This recommendation was announced during the first meeting of the responsible leaders for the biblical apostolate in Oceania and prompts the desire that it be spread over all the countries. But let us not be pessimistic! In the meantime, regular national meetings, as for example in India and more recently in Oceania, are a sign that the biblical apostolate and the biblical-pastoral ministry gradually show effects thanks to the Council Document DEI VERBUM. The final statements from Bangalore (pages 4-7) and Manly (pages 7-8), testify to the biblical apostolate in these regions.

We received many encouraging responses to our letter addressed to the Bishops' Conferences concerning a proposed Bishops' Synod with the theme "The Place of the Bible in the Church". Among others, Cardinals Bernardin of Chicago and Martini of Milan and members of the Synod Council supported this proposal (page 8).

In view of the Plenary Assembly of the Federation in Bogotá, 1990, BULLETIN DEI VERBUM continues the publication of reflections on the theme "The Bible in the New Evangelization". In this issue, you will find the contribution by Paul Puthanangady, Bangalore (pages 9-11). Do not hesitate to communicate to us your thoughts and your ideas. The success of the Plenary Assembly depends on the participation of all members in the preparation.

The biblical apostolate may present itself in a variety of forms. What a vast difference exists between the basic bible course organized by the German Biblical Association (pages 12-14) and the biblical catechesis offered under a tree in Chad (pages 14-15)! And yet one can profit from both of these unique presentations.

The question of biblical "Fundamentalism" comes up every so often in the discussions of Federation members. BULLETIN DEI VERBUM has published two articles on this topic already. On pages 15-16, you will find a contribution entitled "The Renaissance of Fundamentalism". This report comes from a Church institution which was founded by the French Bishops' Conference explicitly because of the problems arising from the success of the sects. The conclusion drawn by this Church institution is very close to the goals of the Federation: "to give easy access to sacred Scripture to all", "to develop Bible reading among the Christian people", "to offer translations which are understandable for everybody, always with introductions, notes and comments".

The "Manifest" of the Swiss Catholic Biblical Association (SKB) too joins the movement, which is wide-spread and welcomed by the Federation, which favors a Bible reading starting from the troubles and needs of everyday life (pages 17-18).

Our friends of Misereor, the famous German funding agency, have produced a Lenten Veil from Cameroon this year which presents a visual commentary to the "Our Father". It is an excellent example of appropriating the gospel prayer. The veil may be of use during a celebration of the "Bible Week" (center insert).

Marc Sevin.

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- INDIA - Sixth National Meeting

Those responsible for the biblical apostolate of the Catholic Church in India met for their Sixth National Congress from 4-8 Dec. 1987. In the following you find the Final Statement of the participants. The text was made available by the National Biblical-Catechetical-Liturgical Centre (NBCLC), Post Bag 8426, Bangalore 5600 84, India.

1. Introduction

"The Bible and the Formation of the Christian Community" was the main focus of the VI All-India Biblical Meeting (4th to 8th Dec. 1987). Gathered at the NBCLC from the four corners of our country, we first shared our joys and sorrows in the biblical apostolate over the past three years.

2. Reasons for gratitude

Bible study and biblical prayer groups continue to flourish throughout the land. More people are taking up higher studies in Sacred Scripture.

The rate of production and distribution of the Bible in regional languages continues to grow impressively.

An ever greater variety of modern, low-cost and folk media is available for the communication of the Word to more people, including the lesser privileged.

A significant number of lay communities have sprung up in various parts of the country. They meet regularly to share God's Word, their light and life-giving bread. Sensitive to the Spirit and to the needs of their neighbors, these grass-root communities are responding courageously in faith to serve the cause of justice to the downtrodden in collaboration with other religions and secular organizations. Throughout the country a need is felt among the people to center their lives on the Word of God.

3. Causes for concern

Although some admirable individual efforts have been made to bring the Bible to a large section of the people, the Church has not adequately implemented the directives of Vatican II regarding biblical apostolate (cf. DV 21-25).

We need a better selection and a more extensive and adequate formation of biblical animators. More opportunities and facilities should be given to lay people and women religious that they may become competent ministers of the Word.

In the teaching of Scripture in seminaries and houses of formation "the written Word of God" does not always function as the "primary and perpetual foundation of sacred theology". The balance between the in-depth and scientific study on the one hand, and a faith-enriching reading in a prayerful atmosphere on the other, appears to have been lost.

Priests are often unable to break the Word effectively for their people. If the ministers of the Word are unable to read the Bible in context, then how can they help others do so?

Christian life is mostly governed by laws and regulations instead of the Word of God - we still have a long way to go before it effectively and existentially touches the life-situation of the people.

Since many liturgical celebrations are not "rich in the divine word", they are often boring and insipid. Hence it does not come as a surprise that a growing number of adults and youth are leaving the Church for membership in sects, or simply drop out of organized religion.

In certain dioceses there is a serious lack of organizations and pooling of resources.

Even today, there are many major Indian languages in which there is no complete Catholic Bible.

4. Many religious, also called to be animators of communities, are largely concerned with the management of big institutions. Instead of being means to spread the Kingdom of God these have often become ends unto themselves.

Above all, the attitude of complacency in some of our dioceses and parishes is a matter for concern. Finally, there remains the temptation to clericalize the Bible: clerics capture the Word of God and keep it imprisoned on the grounds of protecting the laity against the evil of fundamentalism and other distorted ways of interpreting the sacred Book.

5. The Word gathers the community

This bird's eye-view of the biblical apostolate in our country makes us keenly aware that the Bible has not yet become the book of the community.

In spite of the fact that only few scrolls were available, it was not so in the beginning. In this context, it is good to recall that all through history, it is God's Word that brings people together and makes them a community. It is God's Word that forms them into communities with a special identity, vocation and mission: Abraham and his family, Moses and the Exodus People, David and Israel, Jesus and his disciples, the apostles and the first Christian communities.

When God's people neglect or even discard the Word, the community fails and the people are scattered. The Lord, however, remains faithful to the Covenant. His Word then regathers the scattered children of Israel (cf. EZ 34 and 36), by sending His special spokesmen, the prophets, who call them to conversion (Jer 3,22), gather them and renew their identity and vigor (Is 43,14-21). In the New Covenant, God's Word has been the supreme source of internal renewal and missionary expansion of the Church (Acts 6,7; 12,24; 19,20).

6. The Spirit enlivens the Word

When the Word is not alive and active in the community, the latter is a heap of dry bones, to use the imagery found in the 37th Chapter of the prophet Ezekiel. The Lord is asking us as He did Ezekiel: 'Can the Christian community, now dry bones, live again?' And when we hesitate with our answer, He himself will speak as He spoke to Ezekiel: "Behold, I will cause breath to enter you and you shall live." With human efforts and skills alone, there will be some rattling and the bones will assemble: there will be sinews, flesh and skin, but no life. Only the Lord can give life: "And I will put my Spirit within you and you shall live..." (Ez 37,1-14).

When the Spirit enlivens the Word it really gathers the community. One of the most frequent complaints of the laity, young and old alike, poor and rich, is that their deep hunger and thirst for God's Word (Amos 8,11) is not being satisfied by their pastors. These ministers may speak many words, but seldom the life-giving Word, the Word filled with the Spirit. Taught by the Holy Spirit, the faithful are being urged to reach day by day a more profound understanding of the Scriptures and to live them more completely (DV 23). In effect, the biblical animators hear the Spirit telling the Churches to give the Bible back to the community. The Bible is the community's book.

7. The Community as interpreter of the Bible

Only the faith community as a whole is able to identify the authentic Word of God. For example, not some lone individuals but the Jewish community finally decided what books were to be included in the Old Testament collection. Likewise the Christian community discerned what writings belonged to the corpus of inspired New Testament writings.

The Bible is not a series of private transactions between God and some individual devotees; God addresses his Word always to the community to purify, liberate, encourage, challenge and enliven it. This fact has great importance for the post-Vatican renewal of liturgy and formation of the community. There can be no real liturgical celebration without a meaningful proclamation of God's Word.

One of the key tasks of community animators is teaching the faithful how to listen in community as a community. When Christians listen to the Word as individuals, all by themselves, they can easily escape the full challenge and total demands of the Gospel; but when they listen and share as a committed

group, the Word of God's power reaches its proper intensity and purpose.

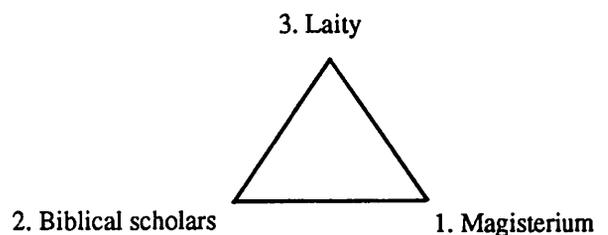
8. No individual or small group of individuals 'owns' the Bible, nor can anyone claim monopoly over the Word of God. The Spirit leads the community into the fullness of truth through its obedience to the Word (John 16,13). In this docility to the Spirit the whole body of the faithful have an anointing whereby it cannot err in matters of faith (LG 12). This demands from the community a personalized, committed faith.

9. A new thrust: Laity's contribution towards biblical interpretation

All around India Christians today are experiencing a real change of heart, as a result of which they surrender themselves unconditionally to Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. These adult conversions take place especially during retreats and missions that stress community reconciliation. Such Christian laity now paves the way to a more truly *catholic* interpretation of the Bible.

A triangle shows the complementarity of all God's faithful in the full interpretation of God's Word:

- 1) the magisterium represented officially by the pastor in the community;
- 2) the exegetes and biblical scholars and;
- 3) the laity.



The life involvement of all these groups, but especially of the laity contextualises their interpretation of the Word of God. Neither one nor the other alone, in isolation, can authentically interpret the Word for a given community. When such attempts are made, the Word is deprived of its full meaning, life and power.

Unfortunately, history is full of examples of one section of the community trying to 'capture' the Word and make it its own exclusive property rather than serving the Word, listening to it reverently and obeying it. In such situations, the community becomes like a valley of dry bones without life.

10. How can we prevent this from happening in our communities?

Vatican II tells us again and again that the Spirit of Christ is at work in all Christ's faithful by virtue of their baptism and confirmation. He invites us - women, men, daughters and sons, maid-servants and men-servants, all (cf. Acts 2,17f) - to an ever

deeper awareness of God's Word. The Spirit thus liberates God's Word from its imprisonment within our limited expectations, prejudices and self-centered individualism by enlightening the *whole* community. In this way, there is a dynamic interaction between the word of the book and the word of life: the proclaimed word and the lived word.

11. The Spirit energizes and ensures a provocative and prophetic interpretation of the Word that challenges all sin, all injustice, all false securities. After calling us to conversion this same Spirit invites us insistently to respond ever more generously and relevantly to his invitation to build up a community that time and again overcomes its selfishness.

Such a vitally alive Church is possible only when the laity's contribution in interpreting God's Word is acknowledged and utilized. To facilitate this is the first duty of the community's ministers - the pastors (LG 37,12).

12. The Council is most emphatic when it tells us that it is the community - never individuals - which, first of all, receives the Word of God reverently as 'living power' (1 Thess 2,13), and then humbly shares itself as a 'Good News' community in missionary service. God's Word never allows a community to be busy only with itself - it urges every Christian to leave the Christian 'compound' and share the 'Good News' with those who have not yet heard it or have not experienced it as 'Good News'.

This sharing implies both a courageous involvement in other people's struggles and aspirations and a convincing proclamation. The Risen Lord sends us (Mk 16,15-18 par.).

13. Practical implications for the ministry of the Word

The renewal called for by this assembly has many practical implications for the biblical apostolate and Church renewal in India.

Primarily we are looking for faith communities which find their origin, identity and joy gathered around the Word of God. For the Word renews them and challenges them to allow God's Spirit to shed light on every aspect of human existence. Such communities make the message of the Gospel their center and inspiration.

How prophetic these communities will be depends upon their originality and courage, the depth of their discernment to read the signs of their situation and the extent of their generosity to bring God's Kingdom nearer by the power of the Spirit (Mk 1,15).

Like Christ, truly Christian communities live, not for themselves but for service to others; they reach out in loving concern to share their gifts. They will constantly examine themselves to see whether they are true signs of Christ's own radical option for the Kingdom, God's own revolutionary reign.

Such Christian communities will regularly analyze their direction and priorities in the fast-changing circumstances of our time. They will also get involved with members of other religions, join them in their pilgrimage towards God, share with them their own God-experience, listening respectfully to theirs and working with them for the Kingdom of God.

14. In order that these communities of the Word may operate along these lines, it is necessary to pay special attention to certain areas of their life and activity:

a) Animators' Formation:

Animators for biblical study and prayer groups must be trained with great care. Their initial training and on-going formation calls for considerable resources. Full-time lay animators deserve special consideration not only in terms of theological-biblical training but also in terms of financial remuneration, job security and working hours. Animators for special groups: families, youth, children, illiterate, lay organizations and associations need specialized courses.

15. b) Seminary Formation:

A key priority for the biblical apostolate in India is to collaborate with the staff of the seminaries. It was keenly felt that a deeper experience of the Word of God must find a place in our seminary formation. Such an experience is indispensable in the preparation of the seminarians for biblical apostolate. Their pastoral formation should give priority to the practical training for a meaningful and relevant proclamation of the Word.

16. c) Inter-Religious Dialogue:

As most Christians live as a small minority in the midst of believers of other world religions, they should also be helped to read the Bible in the context of a multi-religious dialogue. Special animators - priests, religious and laity - have to be educated for this purpose. The following guidelines may be helpful:

- 1) spreading the value of God's Kingdom which Christ himself embodied in word and deed, with those of other religious traditions;
- 2) being open to the values found in other religions;
- 3) sharing our Christ-experience with persons of other religions;
- 4) re-reading the Bible in the light of the non-biblical revelations and in the context of a sincere inter-religious dialogue.

17. d) God's Word and the Media:

Jesus communicated himself to us in and through his person in all that he did and said. Yes, the medium IS the message! This is nowhere more perfectly exemplified than in Jesus himself. This fact teaches us how to use media in a very personal manner, with ample time and in a prayerful atmosphere. This

demands ingenuity and a special formation for the different kinds of media at the service of the Word.

18. Mary, the model for a community of the Word

In this Marian Year which announces a renewed Christian community at the dawn of the third millennium, we look to Mary who lived from God's Word in such an exemplary manner that Vatican II rightly bestowed upon her the title 'Mother of the Church'.

She conceived Christ in faith before she welcomed him within her body. She showed her ability to interpret the reality in the light of faith (Lk 1,46f) and she joined the faith community in its joys and sorrows as it awaited perseveringly for the fulfillment of God's promises (Acts 1,14).

Our Church needs to become like Mary - a community that listens in faith to God's Word, interprets the Indian reality in the light of God's own preferential love for the poor and oppressed, and joins the pilgrim people of this land journeying towards its destiny enlightened by the Word of God and energized by his Spirit.

19. Conclusion

The main thrust which we propose for the triennium of the biblical apostolate in India may be stated once again.

If we are serious about our desire for Church renewal, this ministry must be de-clericalized. Well-chosen and well-trained laity, women and men, have to be employed at all levels of Church life: village, parish, diocese and region. In the power of the Word they must be able to denounce the present unjust structures in civic society and even in ecclesial circles and thus unleash the liberative thrust of the Word of God. God never speaks in a vacuum; he always enters into the depths of human existence. The book of life, today's India, has to be read and transformed in conjunction with the book of God's Word, the Bible.

This demands activity; it also demands silence, listening and contemplation at the deepest level. The Constitution on Divine Revelation states so well, prayer needs always to accompany our reading of Scripture, so that God and his people may converse together (DV 25). Therefore, together with the outgoing liberative action of the Word must always be a correlative contemplative in-gathering (Rom 12,1). Biblical animators will impart this type of formation only if they themselves also embody these values: prayer, contemplation, worship, adoration. When this happens, the Spirit will manifest himself through our Christian communities. He will remind them of all that the Lord said and did. They will proclaim his marvels.

Give the Bible back to the community! There it belongs!

- OCEANIA - First Meeting

From 8-13 Feb. 1988, seventeen persons in charge of the biblical-pastoral ministry, representing Australia, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, and Tonga, met for the first time. Fr. L. Feldkämper, General Secretary of the Federation, and Fr. Puthanangady, Coordinator of the Federation for Asia, participated in the meeting. Here follows the text of the final declaration of that meeting adopted on 13 Feb. 1988. This text is available from the General Secretariat, Postfach 10 52 22, D-7000 Stuttgart 10.

We, the representatives and official delegates of our Bishops' Conferences met in Sydney, Australia, from 8 to 13 February 1988, under the auspices of the World Catholic Federation for the Biblical Apostolate (WCFBA) for the first All-Oceania Biblical-Pastoral Workshop. The Workshop was held at St. Patrick's College, Manly.

At the conclusion of the Workshop, we arrived at the following statement:

The Word of God is at the heart of the whole call to renewal from Vatican II, "easy access to the Sacred Scriptures should be provided for all the Christian faithful" (DV 22).

The Word provides:

- ...the inspiration for liturgical renewal;
- ...the model for a truly Christian catechesis;
- ...the criterion for resolving justice and peace issues;
- ...the common ground for ecumenical dialogue, and it is the Word which renews each person.

This call to renewal is to the whole people of God - leaders, teachers, laity - whose living experience is the greatest treasure that the Church possesses.

The Word of God speaks to us NOW - it is immediate; it makes its claim NOW. And it is NOW that we experience the power of the gospel message. It is towards the present incarnation of the living and powerful message of the gospel that all the Church's activity is directed.

Specifically, we recognize that:

- ...in a renewed Church, the Bible is at the center of our spirituality.

- ...the Bible brings us into an encounter with God who communicates with humanity, the God who is incarnate, alive, active

and transforming of persons and of society, not a god confined to words in a book.

...the Bible becomes truly God's life-giving Word when it is in dialogue with the experience and culture of those who hear, listen and actively respond to it.

...biblical renewal calls for the development in all people of a "biblical mind" which is characterized by openness, flexibility and readiness for the unexpected. It confronts us with the discomfort and the disruption that the Word will cause on a personal level and also the tension which will arise between the Bible and the Church, between Scripture and tradition, and between the community of believers and the sinful structure of society.

The practical implications of the above all cluster around the strong affirmation that THE BIBLICAL APOSTOLATE DESERVES A HIGH PRIORITY:

...the biblical apostolate should be an integral part of the overall pastoral strategy at national, provincial, diocesan and local levels.

...wherever possible, we should use existing structures rather than multiply programs or invent new structures. *These need to be empowered for the realization of ongoing biblical renewal in the Church.*

...priority should be given to the training of competent lay persons, men and women, for all aspects of biblical education in our local churches.

...we recommend that religious congregations, as well as including biblical studies in their formation programs, should offer members opportunities for training in the biblical apostolate.

...it is imperative that clergy (bishops, priests and deacons), whose role in the liturgical experience of the entire community is so central, be renewed in biblical understanding and appreciation. Bishops and Church leaders need to seriously ask themselves why this is often not taking place given the wide range of biblical renewal already available.

...a directory of resources should be prepared which can provide information about courses, programs, audio-visual material etc. available within a specific region.

...we recognize and encourage cooperation with the Bible Societies, especially in translation work and also the exchange of resource material.

...we recommend that, where necessary, dioceses acquire adequate resources for the biblical apostolate and provide for their availability.

...we recognize that the region of Oceania is one in which some countries have an abundance of personnel, programs and finances which could be shared with the areas where these resources are less abundant.

...we recommend that a liaison person be appointed whose function will be to act as a channel of information regarding programs and courses; books and media resources; *and personnel including visiting speakers.* It is suggested that initially this person reside in Sydney as a central location. The Episcopal Conferences of the region are requested to meet the costs for this service.

PROPOSAL FOR A SYNOD ON THE BIBLE

One of the recommendations made at the 1984 Plenary Assembly of our Federation was to suggest that a Synod on "The Place of the Bible in the Life of the Church" be held. The last issue of the BULLETIN published the letter which Msgr. Ablondi, the President of our Federation sent to the Presidents of all the Bishops' Conferences affiliated with our Federation inviting them to consider this suggestion. In addition to the favorable response received from Cardinal Willebrands, President of the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity, several letters have reached Msgr. Ablondi and the General Secretariat from both the Synod Council and from the Bishops' Conferences of Australia, Belgium, Bourkina Faso, Chili, England, France, Gambia-Liberia-Sierra Leone, Italy,

Malaysia-Singapore-Brunei, Mexico, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nigeria, South Africa, Switzerland, Tanzania, United States, Zaire and Zambia.

Cardinal Martini, Archbishop of Milan, writes in his response to Bishop Ablondi: "...I myself strongly support the idea that a Synod treat a theme relative to the Word of God. In any case, it seems to me that it would be good to submit this theme with sufficiently strict and precise guidelines to avoid digressing onto many other themes. For me the most adequate format appears to be an examination of how the Church has applied Chapter 6 of DEI VERBUM 25 years after its promulgation..."

BIBLE FOR THE NEW EVANGELIZATION (II)

In view of the next Plenary Assembly of the Federation which is to take place in Bogotá in 1990 with the theme "The Bible in the New Evangelization", Bulletin Dei Verbum is publishing different contributions on this topic (see Bulletin Dei Verbum No.7, pgs. 9-11). The following paper was submitted by Fr. Paul Puthanangady, Director of the National Biblical-Catechetical-Liturgical Center in Bangalore and Executive Committee member of the Federation.

Pope John XXIII described the II Vatican Council as a new Pentecost. The two characteristics of this Pentecostal event are the transformation of the disciples into apostles, i.e. evangelizers, and the transformation of the institutionalized Jewish community into a community of mission for the world. The pre-Vatican II Church was badly in need of the same type of transformation. It had, to some extent, fossilized its discipleship by identifying its orthodoxy with its dogmatic and ritualistic formulation of faith; it had become highly institutionalized with its structures of action rather than being a community of mission.

The Holy Spirit, through the Council, asked the Church to be a "light of the Nations" (*Lumen Gentium*) and a community in the world "*Gaudium et Spes*". In order to do this, the Church had once again to listen to the Word ("*Dei Verbum*") and to experience the presence of the Lord in her life ("*Sacrosanctum Concilium*"). Thus Vatican II inaugurated a new Pentecost in the life of the Church. This marks the beginning also of a new epoch in the history of the mission of the Church. The Constantinian era had made her free to exist as a visible community in the world; but she identified her mission in terms of expansion of the institutional Church all over the world. The new era inaugurated by the Spirit at Vatican II asks the Church to find her identity in her sense of mission; as a consequence she has to be present in the lives of the people facilitating their response to the Gospel while building up the local Churches. This new approach to the mission of the Church, I believe, is what we mean by "New Evangelization". Such understanding has serious consequences on all the activities of the Church.

We shall see this new vision reflected in a special way in two areas of the Church's mission: her missionary activity and her approach to biblical apostolate. As is evident, these two are so closely linked that they affect and modify one another.

A. MISSIONARY ACTIVITY OF THE CHURCH

The II Vatican Council says "Missionary activity is nothing more, and nothing less, than the manifestation of God's plan; its epiphany and realization in the world and in history; that by which God, through mission, clearly brings to its conclusion the history of salvation (AG N. 9). Again, "Missionary activity tends towards eschatological fullness" (AG N. 8).

Analyzing these two statements we can pick out the following characteristics in the fulfillment of the evangelizing mission of the Church.

1. Evangelization as manifestation (Epiphany) of God's plan:

Epiphany is to make visible what was hidden. God's plan of salvation is present in all people. The Gospel is not a new doctrine primarily about God, but a means for creating a new awareness of God's presence in our lives. In the first place, the preaching of the Gospel is not the teaching or instructing from a book, but enabling people to listen to God who is already present in their lives. The Good News is not so much something brought from outside as it is the removal of obstacles which bar our experiencing of God's love for people. It is a call to conversion which means being able to listen to God (the uncircumcised of heart are those who cannot listen; the circumcised of heart are those who can listen).

The evangelizer should fulfill his mission by facilitating this capacity to listen. This would require a change in the style and method of action which we shall describe a little later.

2. Evangelization is the realization of God's plan in the world and history:

The purpose of evangelization is not the salvation of souls, but the creation of a new earth and new direction for human history. With the resurrection of Christ, God has already created the new man and has set the goal of history. The transformation of history and the journey towards this goal is to be the work of Christ living in his disciples. The Gospel is entrusted to them in order that they may achieve this. This has very serious consequences for the mission of the Church which we shall indicate later.

3. Evangelization is to bring to conclusion the history of salvation:

History of salvation, we know, is not a parallel history to that of humankind. It is God's acting in and through humanity. It is the interpretation of the history of humankind in terms of God's Word. It will be completed when all the words become the Word of the Lord and every event becomes the expression of the goodness and love of the Lord. Evangelization is the activity by which this is gradually being realized. The Church is sent into the world by God for this purpose as were the prophets of old. The Church is given the Spirit in order to collaborate with God in the creation of this new world and is given a share in the ministry of Christ so that she may help humanity arrive at this goal.

4. Evangelization is an activity that tends towards eschatological fullness:

Eschatology is not so much a point of arrival as an orientation towards the goal. Evangelization is proclamation of the death and resurrection of the Lord until he comes, that is, so that he may come. It is an activity which gives direction, orientation and purpose to the historical movement. In order to effect this, the Church must be fully immersed in the historical struggle of humanity.

Seen in this perspective, evangelization will have certain characteristics stemming from this.

B. BIBLICAL APOSTOLATE

In the realization of the above-described evangelizing mission of the Church, what is the role of the Bible and what would be the characteristics of biblical apostolate? This is the specific issue which we as members of the World Catholic Federation for Biblical Apostolate have to take up in order to make our role in the Church relevant on the threshold of the 21st century.

The document *Dei Verbum* says "In the sacred books the Father who is in heaven comes lovingly to meet his

children, and talks with them" (DV 21). We shall now highlight a few characteristics of our biblical apostolate in the light of the above cited text.

1. The Bible is the Word of the Father to his children:

The approach to the Bible as a book has to change. It was word in the beginning; it was word in its original communication; it became a book only at a later stage. It is necessary to recapture the dynamism of the Word, not by studying, but through personal reflection and listening attentiveness.

Since it is the Word of the Father and transcends the book, it is not limited to a particular people or person. The Father has been speaking to all his children, the whole of humanity; it is to this word that they should listen. The Bible evangelizes people so that they can listen to the Father; the Bible asks people to convert themselves and believe in the God who loves them. Therefore, if we do our biblical apostolate without taking into consideration the various means by which God communicates with His children, we shall end up by making them listen to us rather than their Father.

2. The Father comes lovingly to meet His children:

The Bible is a word of love. But love cannot be experienced unless it is incarnate. The biblical apostolate should bring people to an experience of God. This means a culturally contextualised reading; a reading from within the struggling human community; a reading that builds up a human community because only in that context will the Fatherhood of God manifest itself.

What we need, therefore, is not so much a diffusion of the book or the propagation of the contents, but an effort to facilitate the encounter of man with the God who speaks to him.

C. CHARACTERISTICS OF OUR BIBLICAL APOSTOLATE IN THIS NEW EVANGELIZATION.

1. It must be dialogical:

When we transcend the Bible as a book and arrive at a stage of personal communication, then we touch the core of Christian revelation: "God loved the world so much that he gave his only son so that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life" (Jn 3,16). This is what we call dialogue. When we read the Bible in a dialogical context, we bring out this experiential content of the Word. For this we should seriously enter into the experience of those with whom we dialogue, especially their religious experi-

The Misereor Lenten Veil from Cameroon

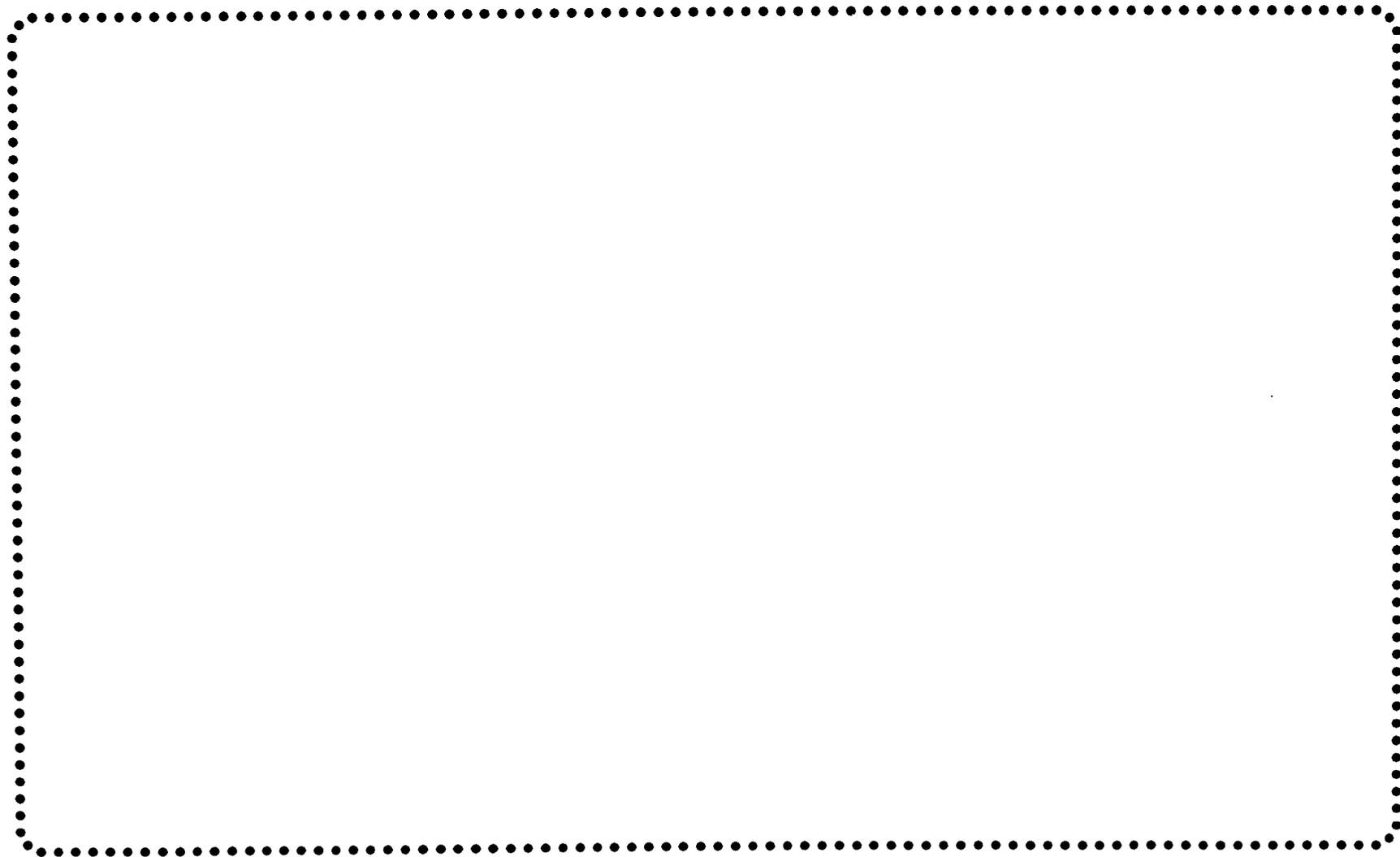
MISEREOR is a funding agency in the Federal Republic of Germany established by the bishops of the country. It supports development projects in all parts of the world to ameliorate the living conditions of those less fortunate.

To accompany the fund-raising campaign which takes place primarily during the Lenten season, MISEREOR and other Catholic organizations of German-speaking countries, have a "Lenten Veil" produced by artists of the country for whom these developments are envisioned. This year, a Cameroon artist proposed a commentary on the "Our Father".

BULLETIN DEI VERBUM reproduces a presentation of the 1988 Lenten Veil based on the decision of the Executive Committee of our Federation who during its meeting last April in Chicago, suggested the use of this veil in conjunction with **Bible Week/Sunday**.

Previously, our former publication WORD EVENT, discussed Lenten Veils from Haiti (WE No. 48) and India (Ibid. No. 56).

On the final page of this insert, please find the necessary information concerning the acquisition of this veil.



1 Our Father in heaven

The scene in the top centre of this Lenten Veil painting shows people having a meal together. Two women and two men are sitting around a large pot and are eating from it using their bare hands. A boy is standing to the side, but he also gets his share. The dog, the birds, the hens and the cock are given bones and crumbs to eat. A young woman is bringing a basket filled with fruit.

Christ is sitting in the midst of them, recognizable only by His red clothes.

Thus the artist points to the Africans' wholistic experience of God and shows how closely and indissolubly the love of God and the love of one's neighbour are linked.

The ancestors, painted along the four sides of the picture as masks and symbolic figures, are instrumental in granting and ensuring this life in its fullness. The Africans do not necessarily conceive God and the ancestors as living somewhere in or above the sky. The earth plays a most essential role for life both before and after death; heaven and earth are seen as one cosmic entity. As mediators between man and God and as helpers in the struggle for existence, the ancestors are not at all dead to the living.

Christ (again recognizable as the red figure in the lower margin of the painting) is 'the first among the ancestors'; He descended to the dead and now leads all human beings and their ancestors to the Father.

2 Thy Kingdom come; Thy will be done, on earth as in heaven

Below the scene of the meal, the painting shows a group of people dancing, accompanied by a drummer and a balafon player (the balafon is an African instrument like a wooden xylophone).

Again we recognize Jesus — this time, the artist paints Him as a drummer. He leads the others by His beat and rhythm, and arouses their joy and happiness. This cheerful scene points to the coming of Jesus, to that time of 'great joy' (Lk 2.10) which has already begun. The eating and dancing scenes show how deeply the Africans are rooted in their communion with God, with all human beings, whether dead, alive, or yet unborn, with all creatures and with the whole of creation. And all this takes place under the eyes of the

ancestors, who as Fathers in faith give their people guidance in their everyday lives.

3 Give us today our daily food

Long ago, the Pallottini missionaries translated the petition for bread into the Beti language as 'Give us today our food'; the artist paints a banana tree to the left and millet plants to the right of the eating and dancing scenes: these are the basic sources of food both in the South and in the North of Cameroon. Between them, he shows the life of the people, their struggle for their daily 'bread', all the way from



birth to death: the woman in labour, the fisherman, the herdsman with his cattle, the two women pounding millet or maize, the women stoning fruit and cultivating the soil, the carrier, and finally, the mortally ill man who is already being mourned, all are part of this everyday life. In this community everyone has his place, and the dignity of each individual is respected. Christ takes part in this daily struggle for survival just as another member of this community. He is the bearer of a heavy load and of God's Blessing at the same time.

To the Africans, salvation takes place in such an everyday life. The petition for 'bread' symbolically represents all vital necessities including human communication and communion. It is a token of the lasting closeness of Jesus, and a pledge of eschatological fulfilment.

4 Forgive us our debts – and lead us not into temptation

The African reality of life is no paradise; it is a world which, due to detrimental behaviour and mistakes committed by individuals, but above all as a result of unfavourable and threatening political, economic, and social conditions, has been shaken to its very foundations.



In the two vertical sequences of symbolic pictures and images next to the masks the artist illustrates these 'debts' and 'temptations': The **cacao bags** (bottom left) and the cacao tree as well as the cotton plant (just beside the millet) symbolize Cameroon's economic dependence on the world market. The very survival of the, largely small-scale, farmers and the stability of the country as a whole are threatened by the continuously falling prices of the main export products; prices which are not fixed by the producing country, but in Europe.

Alcoholism, symbolized by the bottle and the glasses, is an expression of a lack of orientation, of resignation and despair.

Corruption is destroying society like a cancer, and it is the poor who suffer most. Many quite normal services can be obtained only by tipping and bribing.

Disease — what too often decides the fate of people afflicted with any serious illness in Africa is a shortage of doctors in many areas and poor hospital equipment.

The **youth** (top right) attend schools based on the French education system. In a country with only a small economy, the formal final exams leave young people without any realistic vocational prospects or job opportunities. Although this formal education alienates the children from the village and will probably leave them unemployed, parents still tend to make any sacrifice in order to ensure that their children have some formal education.

Urban life: since villages often do not even have the most basic facilities to enable people to live a dignified life (e.g. no electricity, no potable water, no access to medical services), young people especially find it impossible to satisfy their needs and aspirations in the rural areas. More and more are being attracted by the glamour of the city. The almost total absence of vocational opportunities engenders a growing frustration and aggressiveness and thus becomes a social and political time bomb for the whole country.

International food aid (bottom right): the USA, the European Community, and even China are flooding the domestic market with their often subsidized surplus production, undermining the prices of domestic products.

5 ... but deliver us from evil

As the series of individual scenes comes full circle, we realize again that the whole Lenten Veil is completely framed by the masks and figures symbolizing the ancestors. Only if the African society continues to remember and respect their ancestors and Christ, by His birth, His suffering, His death, and His resurrection is integrated into this community as the 'first among the ancestors', will Africans be able to feel 'at home' and will at the same time be strengthened in their faith that life in its fullness is open to them; then there will be new hope in the African history of suffering, and the liberating message of the Bible will bear fruit.

The Misereor Lenten Veil from Cameroon

The Background

The scenes depicted in this Lenten Veil are inspired by the social, economic, and cultural situation of sub-saharan Africa and in particular of Cameroon.

The Theme

The central theme of this Lenten Veil is the petitions of the Lord's Prayer. God as Immanuel (i.e. "God with us") accompanies and guides the Africans in their daily lives: from the burden of securing a bare subsistence, to dancing, festivities, and the communion (which can be both profane and eucharistic) taking place when they have their meal together.

Maintaining an intense relationship with the ancestors - represented by the masks, symbols, and figures in the margin of the painting - is an essential principle of African life and culture; they are mediators between man and God and help people master the difficulties of their lives.

Christ is in the midst of them (Mt 18,20), recognizable by his clothes painted mainly in red, the color of life. As the "first among the ancestors" he "descended to the dead" (the Creed) and leads all human beings to the Father.

The Message

This Misereor Lenten Veil provides an insight into everyday rural life in Cameroon; it is deeply marked by a specific African perception of God, man, and the world. The way African people manage to cope with the difficulties of life as a community as well as the growing threats from outside (cf. the vertical sequences of scenes next to the masks) should stimulate us to question and think over our own life and our own faith.

The Author

The artist who conceived this Lenten Veil of 1988 is René Tchebetou of Cameroon.

For instruction concerning the ordering of the Lenten Veil, please contact:

MISEREOR
Mozartstraße 9
D-5100 AACHEN

Large Misereor Lenten Veil

printed in 7 colors on strong cotton.

Measures: 2.66 m X 1.80 m (motif)
2.80 m x 1.94 m (overall)
(Order No. 211 588)

Small Misereor Lenten Veil

equal in quality to the large Lenten Veil.

Measures: 102 cm x 69 cm (motif)
120 cm x 82 cm (overall)
(Order No. 211 688)

Explanatory Leaflet to the Misereor Lenten Veil

Copies of this leaflet may be ordered free of charge. Also available in French, German and Spanish.
(Order No. 211 788)

Color slides on the Misereor Lenten Veil

Eighteen color slides (unframed, with booklet in German) showing

-the total motif

-nine individual scenes of the Lenten Veil.

Eight further color slides present concrete examples from Africa to illustrate the problems depicted in the Lenten Veil.
(Order No. 212 288)

ence. We should not compare their experience with ours because every experience is unique. We should not fight with words, as we often do taking even the Word of God as a weapon. If we do this, the word becomes a dead word and we are far from what Christ says - that his words are life. "The words which I have spoken to you are both spirit and life" (Jn 6,63). This level of spirit and life is where dialogue can take place.

In our case one of the most privileged areas of this dialogical approach to biblical apostolate is as regards our relationship with the non-Christian scriptures. The new evangelization will consist of establishing a meaningful dialogue with the world religions. However, this is not possible without taking into consideration the scriptures of these religions.

2. Inculturation:

Our dialogical approach to biblical apostolate carries with it a very important consequence - the cultural integration into the community. The Scriptures have sprung from the religious cultural heritage of the people. We cannot enter into meaningful dialogue with anyone without a process of inculturation. This is an area of our biblical apostolate which requires a deeper investigation. The word that we proclaim in the Bible is an incarnate Word, that is, culturally conditioned. The proclamation of Jesus as the Lord is clothed in a particular cultural garb. We cannot really proclaim the Word, proclaim that Jesus Christ is the Lord with a view to building up a believing community unless this proclamation passes through the culture of the community and is expressed through its cultural categories. Our method of biblical apostolate should take this cultural element seriously if it is to be the fulfillment of the mission entrusted to us by Christ.

3. Humanization:

The Word of God is a creative word. Today it cannot create unless it removes the chaos created by man's selfishness. When it does this, it becomes redemptive. Our biblical apostolate should be given this redemptive character. This will happen only if the proclamation takes place in the socio-economic-political context. The human condition of sin and injustice is the result of not permitting the word of love to penetrate our society. To proclaim the word in such a society without questioning it, without denouncing it, without destroying it, will take away from the word its redemptive power. It is true, of late, this dimension of the Bible has become more evident in some parts of the world; but it has to become a world-wide phenomenon. The World Catholic Federation for the

Biblical Apostolate has the very important role of facilitating the functioning of the Word along these lines.

4. New Hermeneutics:

The new approach to biblical apostolate which I have described above will necessarily call for a new hermeneutics. Some constituent elements of this hermeneutics are the following:

- a) A contemplative reading of the Bible. This will enable the apostle to get to the core of the Bible before he begins its interpretation in the cultural, social and linguistic context.
- b) An ability to listen to God's Word that is found outside the Bible. This will manifest itself as an unconditional receptiveness to all.
- c) A capacity to enter into the religious, social and economic situation of others. This will make the interpretation of the Word become a message of salvation. The Bible will truly become the Gospel, the Good News. This is precisely biblical apostolate.

CONCLUSION

In our biblical apostolate for new evangelization we should be possessed by the power of the Spirit. We must allow the Spirit to remind us. A reading of the Bible after this action of the Spirit will give the words of the Bible its universal salvific significance because the Word will have come alive. Since it will be the Spirit that will speak through us, it will be truly the Word of the Father to His children. Since it will be a Word that fulfills all human aspirations expressed in the religious, social, political and economic strivings of man, it will be an authentic word of universal salvation. In order to use this method of biblical apostolate we need more prophets than scholars, we need more men of prayer than interpreters of the Bible. The community will have a very important role to play in this because the apostle will be speaking and acting from within the community of faith rather than from the midst of learned scholars.

Paul Puthanangady, SDB
NBCLC Director
Bangalore, India

**The World Catholic Federation for the Biblical Apostolat (WCFBA)
Invites those responsible for the biblical apostolate and the
biblical-pastoral ministry to celebrate Bible Week every year**

**A Chance for the Biblical Apostolate
and the Biblical-Pastoral Ministry:**

THE BIBLE WEEK

As a member of the Federation, you are active in the biblical apostolate and in the biblical-pastoral ministry of your region, country, diocese, and parish. What do you think about the proposal to celebrate a BIBLE WEEK together with other apostolic and pastoral organizations?

The Executive Committee of the WCFBA would like the annual celebration of Bible Sunday or Bible Week to become widely accepted due to the efforts of its members.

WHY BIBLE WEEK?

In some countries, Bible Week has already been introduced and has proven itself to be an excellent means of helping the biblical apostolate and biblical-pastoral ministry.

The 1985 Extraordinary Synod of Bishops' expressed criticism that the pastoral guidelines of the Constitution DEI VERBUM had been "too much neglected". Therefore, all those active in the biblical apostolate and in the biblical-pastoral ministry were strongly urged to work with zeal in implementing these Guidelines.

A Bible Sunday/Week can:

- *Stimulate the faithful to read the Bible as the Conciliar Constitution DIE VERBUM demands.
- *Reinforce the biblical movement within the Catholic Church, thus helping the groupings within the Christian community understand all the better the necessary biblical dimension their various activities must have.
- *Fortify the faithful against the propaganda of the sects and increasing fundamentalism.
- *Offer nourishment for the spiritual life of the communities.
- *Help towards a better understanding of the Liturgy of the Word in the Mass.

Further information:

**General Secretariat,
Postfach 10 52 22,
D-7000 Stuttgart 10.**

Experiences

Federal Republic of Germany: The Basic Bible Course of the Catholic Biblical Association

Wolfgang Wieland, animator in the Department for Adult Formation for the diocese of Rottenburg-Stuttgart, gives here a brief account of an original experience: "Basic Bible Course" worked out by the biblical-pastoral service ministry for Germany, the "Katholisches Bibelwerk".

A successful experiment:

Some years ago, such an extensive biblical enterprise (implemented by the Department of Adult Education and the Catholic Biblical Association) would have been unthinkable. In 1983, when the organizers offered an annual one year course on the New Testament to the general public for the first time, they did so with great hesitation. Would there be enough participants ready to give so much time and energy to the Bible: nine consecutive weekends, time-consuming follow-up work; and, in between, eight evening meetings within small groups? The surprise was great when the course suddenly was overfilled: sixty women and men between 17 and 70 years signed up for the course. Since then two annual courses on the New Testament and two on the Old Testament have taken place, each time with sixty to sixty-five participants composed primarily of community members who for the most part are honorary collaborators in parishes and groups with only very few having a theological background. Two thirds are between the ages of 20 and 40, about this same percentage are women, and many are married couples. They represent a cross section of society from the apprentice and blue collar worker to the professional in the medical and religious sectors. What is especially pleasing and encouraging is that almost all participants of the two New Testament courses have continued their biblical discovery voyage through the Old Testament basic Bible course. In January 1988, the third New Testament annual course began and, just as before, not all of those interested could participate thus necessitating another course in 1989. In my 11 years as expert in theological adult formation, these courses belong among my most beautiful experiences: because of the continuity and intensity of the work, which in these courses was and is possible; because of the theological and human openness which could grow due to the multifor m nature of the Bible; and because of the increasing independence, maturity and identity in faith which the course instilled within the majority of the participants.

The global approach to the biblical text.

The fundamental goal of our course can be expressed in one word - "global". This holds true especially as regards the global approach to biblical texts. In the parishes, very different biblical seminars and courses are being offered: those which furnish basic knowledge about the origin of biblical writings (their theological and literary peculiarities); and those with a biblical theological concern which try to familiarize people with the central biblical contents and motivations thereby helping them enlighten their faith. Similarly, there are courses whose objective is a deeper experience of one's personal life starting with the Bible and finally more and more Bible discussion groups that cultivate this spiritual and direct approach to the Bible. These latter have as their goal making biblical texts more personal and therefore more applicable in today's world. We intended to give attention to all these approaches in our course because it is only with this global approach that the strangeness of the biblical text together with man of today with his experiences is taken seriously. Thus it becomes a living exchange between text and participant and the tension between the experience (which once upon a time generated the biblical text) and the new experience (which is effective among us today), becomes fruitful.

In interpretation research, we have alternated more analytical methods and discussion groups with more creative and life-oriented techniques resulting in a deeper spiritual treatment. The entire person was brought into play. We have, for example, re-enacted the different positions of the Apostle's Council in groups (Acts 15) thus this Apostle's Council happened once again. We staged the Corinthian abuses at the Lord's Supper in a play. We imitated the motifs of the story of the magician by corresponding body expressions and we tried to put some of these motifs on stage. Or we sat with the Emmaus' disciples on our own dark mountain of affliction and distress and talked about our own encounters with grief in order to investigate the Easter experience of the past and present.

We also placed a great deal of emphasis on an all-encompassing spiritual atmosphere in which the Word of God could reach us personally and invite us at the same time to celebrate the life that proceeds from this Word. The participants should not be and did not want to be just a learning community but also a believing and praying community in which they try to live out what they had discovered in the Bible. In songs, prayers, Bible meditations, meditative body exercises and above all in the common Eucharistic celebration every weekend, the newly gained insights were time and again translated into the spiritual dimension of the personal and communal life of faith.

We confronted the hard text analysis just as intensively. We wrestled with the strangeness of the biblical text and delved into the contradictions expressed therein. I mention this because presently this text analysis is, at times, discredited and irresponsibly neglected because of a presumably more spiritual and actualizing analysis. We theologians in the animation team considered it also our task to make the participants conscious of the distance that exists between the biblical text and us - to

make these texts understandable by confronting them with our knowledge and experiences.

The entire Bible.

We were concerned not only with a multiple approach to the biblical text but also with an approach to the entire Bible. Quite often in Bible work, the Bible is merely used as a quarry. The participant of a Bible seminar is usually confronted with segments of different texts; rarely with the context; and almost never with the variety and diversity of the Bible. It is, however, only in this variety and diversity of experiences that the Bible develops its potential and liberating force. In its totality, our course with this global approach to the Bible, left a strong impression on most of the participants.

General structure.

When planning the content of the course, we, a team of five animators, found ourselves nonetheless faced with the problem of selection which we had to make due to the intensity of the work. We finally decided to program nine units from the New Testament and nine from the Old Testament. For the New Testament course structure, we took the liturgical year as our orientation. We treated, for example, the passion of Jesus during Lent; the Easter Gospels during that season; the Acts of the Apostles and the account of Pentecost around Pentecost time; and the Infancy Gospels from Luke and Matthew during the time of Advent. Here follows the program of the course:

New Testament:

1. The Gospel according to Mark. Introduction to fundamental questions posed by the Bible - 2. The miracles and parables of Jesus. The Kingdom of God and the message and life of Jesus - 3. The passion of Jesus. Synoptic comparison of the gospels. - 4. The Easter Gospels. Which experiences are found in the different Easter narratives? - 5. The Acts of the Apostles. The Pentecost event-the early days of the Church (Lucan theology). - 6. The sermon on the mount. How did Jesus intend a community (Matthean theology). - 7. The Epistles of Paul to the Galatians and the Corinthians. Pauline theology and the proclamation of Christ. - 8. The Gospel according to John. The Johannine theology. - 9. The Infancy Gospel. Who is Jesus?

Old Testament:

1. The beginnings of Israel. The history of the patriarchs: from Abraham to Joseph. - 2. The fundamental experience of Israel. Exodus: a people finds its faith. - 3. The conquest of the Promised Land. Is the God of the Bible violent? - 4. and 5. In between power and charism. The kings of Israel and the prophets (a block of four days). - 6. Between doubt and hope. Israel in exile. - 7. The question for the sense of life. Wisdom literature in Israel. - 8. Between the two testaments. Confrontation with the hellenistic culture. - 9. The Psalms. Prayers of Jews and Christians.

Work method.

The work on material of each block consisted of four elements, which could be used differently and with varying intensity by the participants.

1. The participants, first of all, had to prepare themselves for the respective weekend by reading the corresponding passages of the Bible.

2. During the weekends, the basic knowledge was not transmitted in the form of conferences and then applied to individual texts, but rather the other way around. We first worked together and exchanged insights on the chosen text. The work in plenary most of the time, therefore, was limited to a summarizing conference at the end of a common trail of learning. For the remainder, we normally worked parallel in five sub-groups, each under the guidance of a member of the animation team. The participants changed these sub-groups each weekend.

3. To augment the weekends, the participants received for private follow-up work: a sheet with controlled questions and brief assignments pertaining to the essential contents of previous weekends as well as a suggested reading list (for this purpose, each participant received two workbooks at the beginning of the course).

4. Finally, once during the week, the participants gathered in smaller regional groups accompanied by a member of the animator team. In these regional meetings, questions left over from the weekend could be taken up by the participants or an additional biblical text referring to a central theme from the previous weekend could be worked on together. These intermittent meetings of regional groups served as additional motivation for the participants "to stay on the ball". Some of these regional groups continue to work together on their own.

Some further remarks.

The crowning conclusion of the long Bible work together was that the courses formed a common journey to Israel. Here all of a sudden the Bible became alive again, was relived again, but in a totally different way.

An inquiry with previous participants reflected that almost all of them take their experience with the Bible back into their communities: as volunteers in parish catechetical work, in Bible circles, or simply with a more intense participation in the life of the community.

Once a year, former participants are invited to another biblical weekend. If one were to satisfy their needs, there would be more such gatherings. If biblical enthusiasm is once aroused... Finally, in the spring of this year, the Catholic Biblical Association published the basic course to the New Testament. Further information: Katholisches Bibelwerk, Silberburgstraße 121, D-7000 Stuttgart 10.

CHAD: Biblical Catechesis under a tree.

Upon return from a journey to Chad, Fr. Lamé, responsible for the National Center for Religious Studies in Paris, has sent the following report on his experiences with biblical catechesis.

We find ourselves in the south of Chad in the middle of the land of the Massa. The parish of Fr. Jacques B. extends over twenty villages. This afternoon, the weekly meeting of the Christians of these villages for biblical catechetical instruction is to take place. We drive there in our small Suzuki car. In front of us lies the large savannah with its scarce vegetation: thorny bushes in

the midst of dry steppe grass with an occasional large tamarind or a fig tree. Three superb calaas take off directly in front of our car. The dust-laden wind, blowing for three days already, puts the horizon into a haze. We pass a dozen round huts covered with straw which belong to a small quiet village. After another two kilometers through the savannah, we see in the distance, a group of men gathered in the shade of a tamarind tree .

There are about 40 persons sitting on the ground in a circle: about 15 women of every age, several small children, 4 or 5 men, just about as many youths and a dozen or more children. Jacques greets every individual in Massa (it will be the only language used during the meeting), introduces me briefly to the group and then the meeting which had already begun continues as though we had not interrupted.

- A young woman narrates (nobody around here possesses a single book or notebook) from her memory, the gospel text of the week: Lk 3,1-18, the sermon of John the Baptist on the shore of the Jordan River.

After she has finished, there are some moments of silence. Then - without any external intervention - another one continues with the same text. Sometimes she seems to be mistaken as two or three of the others correct her while they continue to make drawings in the soil or quiet a crying child. She corrects herself and continues. Soon, a man of advanced age begins to speak. He narrates fluently, then hesitates and stops. Someone else helps by prompting him with the omitted sentence and the man is able to continue his narration. Next in line is a young man. Fr. Jacques whispers into my ear that this man used to be a high school student who returned to the village after failing the final exam twice. Fluently and without hesitation he recites the Gospel text. In this manner, one after another, more than a dozen people recite the same text - the preaching of John the Baptist.

All the while one of the women, hardly noticeable as she sits amongst the other women with a baby in her arms, attracts our attention because it is she who corrects the speakers most of the time. Jacques whispers into my ear that she is Pauline, the catechist - or as they say here, the transmitter - the one who is responsible for spreading the Word of God in this community.

Pauline sometimes addresses the group without leaving her place and after the text has been memorized, she helps the group with the interpretation and understanding of the passage: "The text says that John the Baptist was a prophet. How do you recognize a prophet?"

One after another in various places in the circle, answers are being formulated: "Because he was dressed with a hide or pelt; because he was fasting ("he jailed his body" as they say in the Massa language); because he is the proclaimer of the Word." "Which Word?"

"The one that called man to return to God..."

"All the prophets have called for conversion, Nathan called David, Elija called Achab, and John the Baptist later on called Herod. But what is it that this one has over the other prophets?" "He prepares the way for Jesus."

"What does he offer man that other prophets did not have to offer?"

"Baptism: a baptism which prepares for the baptism by Jesus, a baptism which leads to Jesus."

"And what does this mean for us today `discipleship of Jesus`?" Pauline asks.

We reach the third part of catechesis: interiorization of the Word of God, the insertion of the Word into the life of every individual.

Again one by one, answers are given in the form of resolute statements, questions or topics for discussion: "That means that one does not let oneself be intimidated or taken advantage of by the police".

"That one does not tolerate confiscation by customs officials of the one kilo of sugar you purchased in nearby Cameroon".

"That one must return the money one has borrowed".

"That we must not give our daughters to rich men as their wives only because we gain a rich dowry for ourselves".

Pauline interrupts once in order to recall the Pastoral Letter of the Bishops of Chad in which all Christians are called upon to work towards a new Chad.

Finally it becomes quiet and with a low pitch, a young woman tunes in on the refrain of a song with many verses in which others join clapping their hands.

Silence again.

The young high school student formulates a prayer. Two or three others follow him. Pauline begins to say the "Our Father" in Massa. The others follow suit with arms out stretched, palms opened toward heaven.

Finally, all rise and turn to us to shake hands in friendship.

The meeting lasted about two hours.

N.B. The parish numbers fourteen Christian communities which could be termed "basic communities" with each group having its own "transmitter of the Word".

Pauline meets every two weeks for a day and a half with Fr. Jacques in the Community Center to discuss the two texts for the next fourteen days.

The same method is always used: they start by memorizing the two texts and investigating their meaning before reflecting on how to apply it to their community's situation.

General Information

CZECHOSLOVAKIA:

Publication of the Ecumenical Translation of the Bible

The long-awaited ecumenical translation of the Bible into the Czech language has been published and for the year 1988, 100,000 copies of this edition are planned.

This translation has the imprimatur and a preface by Cardinal Frantisek Tomásek. In his preface, the cardinal reminisces

about the solemn enthronement of the Bible during the II Vatican Council. Then he quotes those sentences from the "Dogmatic Constitution on the Divine Revelation" which refer to the translation of sacred Scripture. Finally, he calls to mind that for more than a thousand years the Bible has been connected with our national and cultural history. A short introduction notes that the translation work of the Old Testament was accomplished by a team. Begun in 1961 by the Evangelical Church of the Bohemian Brothers, in later years representatives of five other churches joined in the work: Roman Catholic, the Hussites, Orthodox, Methodist-Evangelical, and Evangelical Brothers.

In the same ecumenical spirit, the New Testament translation also has been accomplished. Apart from the general introductions to the Old and New Testaments as well as the introductions to the individual books of the Bible, the edition also contains well-known texts from the tradition of the people relative to the Bible: texts from Saints Cyril and Method as well as the "Proglas" (the prologue to the Slavik translation of the four gospels).

The detailed table of contents of all the books of the Holy Scripture contains also the individual titles of the texts within. It is a good aid for those who until now do not feel comfortable with the Bible. Additionally, there are eight geographical maps of the biblical countries

For the Catholics of the country, this is the first complete translation of the Bible into Czech from the original text.

This beautiful edition of the Bible can be purchased at a reasonable price by everyone in the country thanks to the efforts of the Union of Middle European Catholic Bible Associations (Arbeitsgemeinschaft Mitteleuropäischer Bibelwerke) mainly through the Katholische Bibelwerk, Stuttgart which contributed to the realization of this project not only through fund raising efforts but also by soliciting support from Catholic funding agencies.

Further information: Österreichisches Katholisches Bibelwerk, Stiftsplatz 8, A-3400 Klosterneuburg.

FRANCE: A Reflection on the "Reawakening of Fundamentalism".

The Church group "Pastoral Ministry and Sects" founded by the French Bishops' Conference dedicated its last meeting to the theme "A Renaissance of Fundamentalism". The following reflections were made by the aforementioned group and with it we continue the series of reports which we published in previous issues of the BULLETIN concerning this topic.

1. The temptation of fundamentalism in exegesis and theology is one of the main characteristics of the new religiosity. Fundamentalism is a sort of protective reflex, for it limits the religious content on things already known and immediately applicable. It affects many varying groups:

- sects like the Jehovah's Witnesses or the Hari Krishna,
- religious movements like the Mormon's or the Baha'ie,
- Christian communities like the Gathering of the Brethern or certain evangelical groups.

Concordism in its extreme form is found with the "Raëliens" who interpret the biblical text verbatim to reinforce their belief

in extra-terrestrial beings and in its most spiritualized form in the Gnostic groups who read the Bible with an esoteric perspective.

An inquiry made in France in 1987, underlines strongly this tendency towards fundamentalism, and at times brings it in connection with the development (noted in all the diocese) of sectarian groups which spring off Catholicism or claim to be Catholic and which are to be qualified as "integrists" or "traditionalists".

A distinction first has to be made, therefore, between:

- "traditionalism": a mental attitude or love of the past, nostalgia, a certain security in the "good old days" which may express a good legitimate sensibility as long as it is not "sectarian";
- "integrism": a cramped, stubborn mentality with its own structure of thought entailing a splitting off from the Church which is accused of treason; at the same time, integrism holds onto a non-critical assurance giving fixation on ancient behavioral patterns of doing things which are accompanied by sectarian attitudes;
- "fundamentalism": in the strict sense, a conservative theological current (originally a mid-stream of American Protestantism) fighting off biblical criticism, theological modernism, and the theory of evolution while accusing other Christians of transforming the gospel into a social message and translating biblical instruction literally in the strictest sense.

2. The fundamentalism of various new religious movements represents typical forms of religious psychology. It answers the needs of many people today.

Sure affirmation about everything which concerns life and religion based on the text of a book (Bible, Gita); the word of a master (guru or leader in direct contact with God); a strong authoritative figure (in the community where the code of life is literally applied); religious sureties based on the words or the scriptures interpreted *ne-variatur* and received as incontestable; the reduction of a message to simple form which complies with your beliefs (in the book which tells you **everything**).

It corresponds sometimes to a structure of a totalizing (even paranoid) spirit which witnesses from the vital need to distort things. This attitude seems to us in our experience in the practice to be a psychological attitude of groups and persons rather than an expression of the theological doctrine. It is typical of the sectarian phenomenon.

3. There are two types of fundamentalists.

In the U.S.A., the new religious fundamentalism of the "Moral Majority" has become a political power found in every omnipresence: in the crusades against the liberation of morals and homosexuals, for the inequality of sexes, and the teaching of creationism/concordism in the schools. In France, it appears in several evangelical groups. Even the Moon sect shows tendencies towards fundamentalism.

Other forms of fundamentalism include: the believing Christian who takes each biblical text as "Gospel truth"; Jehovah's Witnesses who find in the biblical text an arsenal of arguments to quell their adversaries; the one who opens the Bible by

chance and stumbles onto a passage he feels is a direct message of God to be taken literally; and the practice of opening the Bible in community reading a passage and then reflecting on it. But some Christian groups sometimes adopt the former attitude.

4. Pastoral guides.

a) First of all a re-reading of the II Vatican Council Constitution on Divine Revelation (DEI VERBUM 18 Nov. 1965) which furnishes several hints in order to detect the practices of the fundamentalistic groups:

- Christianity is not a religion of the book but of the Word - the Word of God,
- the Word of God is given to us in order to show us the way to salvation and not to furnish us with scientific information concerning the creation of the world,
- the Bible, as every other scripture, has different levels of texts and one must learn how to discern these varying levels (DV 12).

b) To take seriously the needs expressed by the rebirth of fundamentalism in the new religious movements and sects, by giving an answer within the Church especially as pertains to the clear and doctrinal guides and to providing "easy access to sacred Scripture for all".

c) Unfortunately, we often are obliged to advise Christians not to discuss the Bible with certain preachers who come to their homes such as Jehovah's Witnesses because of the fact that their reading has been falsified from the beginning. The only fruitful dialogue would be an exchange of spiritual experiences with the visitor - but this dialogue is rarely accepted by the preacher.

d) Encourage Bible reading of the Christian community - by being more attentive to catechesis, to the three Bible readings at Mass and to the development of Bible groups. Further, more translations should be provided that are understandable by all and always endowed with introductory explanations. Numerous Gnostic groups and preachers who come to the home with their particular approach to the Bible seriously endanger a great segment of Christians of the new generation who have become "religious illiterates". Promising steps are being taken to limit the effect of these negative influences.

Further information: "Pastorale et Sectes", Père Jean Verrette, Evêché, 82017 F-Montauban cedex.

INDIA: 1988 The Year of the Word of God In Northeast India

The Bishops of Northeast India decided in 1980 to celebrate 1990 as the Centenary Year of the establishment of the Catholic Church in the region. It was also decided at that time that a nine-year spiritual preparation program be drawn up. Thus a theme was assigned for each year to stimulate Bible study, reflection and action. The year 1988 was declared "Year of the Word of God" with the motto: "Know, love and proclaim the Good News".

On 22 Nov. 1987, the eight bishops of the region issued a joint pastoral letter addressing themselves to all the faithful in Northeast India exhorting them to study, meditate and proclaim the Word of God more effectively.

The letter is divided into three parts plus a supplement with many practical suggestions and questions for discussion. The main themes of the letter deal with: *God's self-communication to man in and through the Word of God; the Word of God in the life of the Church; the Word of God in the context of Northeast India.* After a perspective and theological study of the role of the Word in the history of salvation and in the life of the Church, the letter calls the attention of the faithful to the specific significance of the Word in Northeast India.

The point of departure is an analysis of the society in Northeast India which is tribal as far as the Church is concerned. These so-called tribal societies with their animistic beliefs, traditions, myths and practices show a special longing for the Word of God in general and for the Sacred Scripture in particular. The letter points out the values of hospitality, equality, individual dignity, and sense of community as found in tribal societies.

Further, the letter places on record the contributions made by other Churches in the field of evangelization through the Word of God. A biblically inspired and oriented mission methodology used by these Churches has proved to be very successful and fruitful.

The bishops then spell out specific ways in which the biblical apostolate in the region could be undertaken: daily reading of the Bible in families; deeper study of it in the educational institutions, parishes and formation houses; preparing personnel for Bible translation; and animation of bible groups. Other suggestions include celebration of Bible Week and Bible Sunday and organization of renewal and up-to-date programs for various groups - especially the lay leaders who are the mainstay of the Church in Northeast India.

The bishops observed that the Church in the region has implemented some of the programs with success. The regional and diocesan biblical commissions and the regional pastoral centers have drawn up various programs (cf. DEI VERBUM No. 5 p. 17). Furthermore, a Center for Biblical Studies and Biblical Apostolate in the region has been established at the Oriens Theological College, Shillong.

Further information: Fr. Thomas Manjaly, Regional Director for Biblical Apostolate, Oriens Theological College, Shillong - 793 008, India

PORTUGAL:

The Tenth National Bible Week

From 21-26 Aug. of this year, the Tenth National Bible Week will take place in Fatima with the theme: "Mary in the History of Salvation". Here are the principle subjects of study:

- Mary in the history of salvation
- Vocation and mission of Mary in the history of salvation. The different images of Mary in the Old Testament.

- The messianic maternity of Jesus. Mary according to the writings of Matthew and Luke.
- Mary, witness of the Messiah.
- Mary a model for God's People.
- Mary, a model for the new humanity. Mary in the Johannine texts.

The Ninth National Meeting of Bible groups took place in Fatima from 16-17 July with the theme "Apocalypse - New Heaven and New Earth".

Further information: Secretariado Nacional de Dinamização Bíblica, Franciscanos Capuchinos, P-2495 Fátima.

SWITZERLAND:

**"Manifest 1987" of the Organization
"Schweizerisches Katholisches Bibelwerk" (SKB).**

In 1985, the Catholic biblical association of Germanophone Switzerland (Schweizerisches Katholisches Bibelwerk) celebrated its 15th anniversary which was not only an occasion for evaluation of work accomplished but also for reflection on future activities. At the end of 1987, the delegates of the SKB wrote the following manifest expressing their convictions concerning their biblical-pastoral work.

The actual situation

The following strikes us:

- a considerable number of people are getting into contact with the Bible almost exclusively during Mass, as a rule in a passive way. In the biblical text of Sundays and feasts, important pages of the Bible are missing; such as the passages concerning women, sections with political-ethical undertones, and texts which pose problems without offering definite solutions. Additionally, Old Testament texts are for the most part left out.
- Despite the efforts of religious pedagogy in school, the vast majority of young people hardly have a positive relationship with the Bible.
- There are traditional offers of biblical formation in regional and parish programs (for example within courses about faith). The Bible plays an important role in the ecclesiastical formation of adults. It is utilized also in prayer and charismatic groups. In some communities ecumenical bible groups were formed.
- Tourism to the biblical countries flourishes. Literary production concerning the Bible is immense. It is unclear if and how the new medias (slides, films and videos, etc.) reach the 80% of the population who do not read any books.
- An increasing fundamentalism is to be noticed not only in sectarian circles. It considers the Bible as a book of "recipes" for timeless answers, tears phrases out of context, pockets their message to justify their own point of view, and even pretends to take the Bible literally.

New accents

Many people search for new values, for an alternative life style. What encourages them to get personally involved with the Bible is rarely the statements by the official Church, liturgical conferences or classroom instruction; they are rather moved by problems of our times and encounters with people who by their

concrete actions make one aware that they have been truly affected by the Bible.

Here and there, groups are forming ready to share with others faith and reflection, questions and doubts, imagination and creativity, which effects practical life with others. Motivation for this inspiration is found in the Bible. The boundaries of faith denominations lose weight in the process.

In some parishes engaged Christians find the energy for their engagement by reading the Bible in community.

The SKB recognizes in these new accents "Signs of the Time" which it wants to reinforce and accompany.

Crucial points

-Biblical work examines the Word of God in the context of life and history. Where it departs from observations and questions of people today and then returns to these observations and questions, it really reaches its goal.

-We are obliged to the methods and results of biblical science. Taking over historical and critical investigation becomes fruitful where people take their own life experience seriously and do not accept unquestioningly supposed self-evident positions. A fruitful approach to the Bible is best guaranteed when we are free in research, open for new attempts at interpretation and ready to dialogue with opposing opinions.

-Where one discovers and experiences a variety of biblical speech about God and to God, pluralism and tolerance may grow: where biblical narrating continues to be woven hope can prosper: where biblical mourning is heard sorrow and misery are expressed, solidarity grows with those whom God favors - the poor: where biblical praise resounds, Christian celebration may succeed.

-We will not ignore that biblical texts time and again have lent themselves to legitimize and cement patriarchal, repressive, exploiting positions and attitudes in the name of a threatening and punishing God.

Together on the road

According to its origin, the Bible must be read from the viewpoint of the anxieties and impasses of life. Our sympathy therefore belongs explicitly to those:

- who as women discover biblical impulses fostering the liberation of women as well as men,
- who as impoverished make faith and hope experiences stimulating new awakenings,
- who as afflicted and startled are no longer willing to accept the destruction of creation,
- who as strangers, as politically persecuted, as passive resisters often have gained a reliable feeling for the biblical concern,
- who as difficult contemporaries in our present day society, doggedly search for justice and are willing to pay a high price for peace,
- who as handicapped and suffering search in the Bible for testimonies of others so afflicted.

It is especially these fellow Christians to whom we owe important impulses to our biblical work. We want to be challenged by them. It is with them that the SKB wants to remain on the way. Thus we may hope that our jubilee motto will not remain a mere slogan: "That they may have Life!"

Books and Documents

Alberto Antoniazzi, La Palabra de dios en la vida del pueblo, Manual de Pastoral Biblica, Secretariado Nacional de Catequesis, Casilla 7857, La Paz, Bolivia, 1987, 90 pages.

This small booklet is the up-to-date version of a publication originally in Portuguese. It offers theological guidelines and practical proposals for an enticing and dynamic biblical-pastoral ministry. The book is divided into three parts: the first part, the most important elements of a "Theology of the Word" are presented; 1. The Council document on the Word of God. 2. Other Council documents. 3. The "Word of God" in the Bible (the word of creation; the word of the alliance; the word of the prophets; the Word of God as a historical force; Jesus Christ, the Word of God; the Word of God in words of man; the word of the apostles continues to live in the Church). 4. The "Word of God": a model of a systematic synthesis.

The second part aims at the practice and deals with the central theme of the Bible in biblical-pastoral ministry (liturgy; proclamation; catechesis; bible groups; private bible reading; bible month; the Bible and the culture of the people; the Bible in the life of the priest and pastoral minister; the biblical animators).

The last part contains work aids for bible study and biblical-pastoral ministry. Thus you find there a list of the most important books for an introduction to bible reading, translations of the Bible into Spanish, publications on biblical theology and criteria for the biblical-pastoral ministry in Latin America. Using the experiences of Bolivia, the last pages offer specific guidelines to the biblical animators of the country.

Euclides Martins Balancin - Ivo Storniolo - José Bortoloni, SALMOS A oração do povo que luta, Edições Paulinas, São Paulo, Brazil, 1988, 60 pages. A simple little book for aiding the reader with "Psalms of people engaged in battle". The goal of the book is to foster several discoveries:

- today the Psalms may become an expression of our relationship to God and to our neighbor;
- the prayer springs from life, and the Psalms teach us to compose new prayers based on the fights, joys, and victories of today's people;
- genuine prayer helps man to uncover depressive structures in society;
- genuine prayer leads to concrete relationships in the community; it challenges us and makes us ready for action which brings about change and leads to freedom.

After a short general introduction to the Psalms, the book is divided into four chapters:

- The People of God Implore (Ps 7 and 12).
- The People of God Give Thanks (Ps 34 and 65).

-The People of God Confide (Ps 62 and 115).

-The People of God Celebrate (Ps 15).

Practical pointers help make this book useful in Christian groups.

Paul Beauchamp, Parler d'Écritures saintes, Seuil, Paris, 120 pages.

Word of God and word of man, this is what the text of the Bible is for the Christian. It is however, difficult to acknowledge the "and" in this conviction. The critical exegete has stressed the human side of the Bible. For this reason some Christians had difficulty recognizing sacred Scripture as "holy" or as "Word of God". Others see in the biblical text nothing else but the written record of Divine Words that came directly from heaven. In seven discourses, Fr. Beauchamp, Jesuit and well-known exegete, offers help to overcome these difficulties. He takes the trouble to explain why sacred Scripture is Word of God and word of man, why the Bible is at the same time an entire library and a single book, why the Bible is the book of a people and a universal book. These discourses are summarized in a small book which may be of profit for ministers in their biblical apostolate work.

Luigi Bontempi et. al., Tradurre La Bibbia Per Il Popolo Di Dio, Morcelliana, Brescia, Italy, 1986, 124 pages.

To celebrate the 60th anniversary of the Publishing House Marcelliana in Brescia, which in 1926 published the first Italian series "The Holy Gospels" by Msg. Luigi Gramatica, a discussion forum was organized with the theme "To Translate the Bible for the People of God". The book summarizes the most important themes of this discussion, as for example "Reading and Translating the Bible in the Synagogue", "Translation of Poetic Texts of the Hebrew Bible", "Liturgical-Pastoral Aspects in Bible Translation", "The Translation - the Endurance of the Word of God in Human Differences".

Thelma Hall, R.C., Too Deep for Words - Rediscovering Lectio Divina, Paulist Press, Mahwah, New Jersey 07430, USA, 1988, 110 pages.

The "Lectio Divina" is a method of prayer which orientates itself to the Bible and which has for 1600 years nourished the spiritual life of numerous faithful. Only in our century has it gone into oblivion and is no longer applied. It is time to rediscover this prayer method which was a proven path to contemplation for centuries. The first half of the book defines this way of praying through scripture and its benefits. Individual sections discuss each of four steps or movements of Lectio Divina: "Lectio" or reading and listening to the Word of God, "Meditatio" or reflection on the Word, "Oratio" or the Word touching the heart, and "Contemplatio" or entering into the silence "too deep for Words".

In the second half, readers will find 500 different scripture texts, organized under fifty themes (The Advent of God, Anxiety, The Call of God, Peace, Gifts of the Holy Spirit, Suffering...). Designed to indicate complete texts in the Bible

that can provide focus for prayer, these texts will offer guidance to those who want to use Scripture for prayer.

Francisco Marques, Vida Viva, Os Salmos para Escolas e Grupos de Jovens, Edições Paulinas, São Paulo, Brazil, 1988, 30 pages.

In four chapters, this little book offers youths a first introduction to the Psalms. The following Psalms are deliberated: Ps 33 - Praise, Ps 139 - Presence of God, Ps 8 - The Greatness of God and The Worth of Man, and Ps 122 - Hail Jerusalem. After a detailed treatment of the Psalm, the reader is invited to reflect based on simple practical directives and to formulate a Psalm for today along the lines of the biblical prayer.

Jesús Olóriz, Conocer la Biblia, Verbo Divino, Estella, España, 1987

Under the title "To Know the Bible", a series of ten booklets, 90 pages each, has been published. It is a kind of a school handbook in the pedagogical sense which is meant as a dictionary for religious education in schools and in catechesis. So far, the following titles have appeared:

1. In the Beginning.
2. The Patriarchs.
3. Exodus.
4. Judges and Kings.
5. Jesus Proclaims the Good News.
6. Jesus Suffers in Jerusalem.
7. Jesus Lives.
8. The Early Christian Communities.
9. The Apostle Paul.
10. An Exciting Adventure.

The objective of the series is to foster personal contact with the Bible, to give necessary aid for Bible reading, to transmit the experience that the Bible is the preferred place to meet God, and to prompt oneself to think about the demands God makes on us.

Various aids are to bring the reader closer to these goals. Each chapter contains an instruction to Bible reading, vocabulary,

geographical explanations, the message itself and a control exercise. These aids give access to the meaning of the text and invite the reader to make this text his own. By their own work and their responses in the group, the youth are invited to share here and now their experiences with the Word of God.

Josef Peterseil - Ulrike Stadlbauer, Freut Euch mit mir, Jesusgeschichten und Gebete, Veritas-Verlag, Linz, Austria, 1988, 50 pages.

Primarily aimed at 4 to 8 year old children, this book contains various passages from the gospel according to Luke. The narratives in this book depict Jesus as Luke sees him: as a Savior who cares primarily for the small, the deprived and the sick. The photos from the Holy Land strive to bring Jesus into focus as a real man and to demonstrate the social and geographical surroundings in which he lived, while photos of the everyday life of the children are meant as an incentive for further prayer. The book is apt to bring the life of Jesus closer to the children while affording them the opportunity to compose prayers in their own words.

Adrian B. Smith, A Reason for Hope, The Human Experience of the Kingdom of God, McCrimmon Publishing Co. Ltd., Great Wakering, England, 1986, 112 pages.

Fr. Adrian B. Smith dedicated this volume to the two organizations with whom he had been working for the last ten years - our Federation and the Movement for a Better World. Fr. Smith is the former founder and coordinator of the Africa-Service of our Federation. His first and foremost goal is to call to mind what a wonderful message of hope Jesus' proclamation has been regarding a glorious future for all of mankind which is expressed through images of the Kingdom of God. Following this he tries to point out how this Good News may also nourish the hope in our world today. In the course of the centuries, the accent has shifted from the Kingdom of God to the Church. Today, we experience the Church in her universal dimension more than ever before. The II Vatican Council grants to the Kingdom of God a central place once again.

The BULLETIN DEI VERBUM

wants to be a link between all the members of the Federation.

**Thank you for contributing to this
by sending to the Stuttgart Secretariat :**

- your reports and activity programs
- your informations
- your realizations (Bible Sunday/Week)
- your publications.