

# Catholic Biblical Federation

No. 20

3 / 1991

Bulletin

*Sei  
verbum*

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English Edition

The Catholic Biblical Federation (CBF) 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 CBF 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  
President of the CBF

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

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The Catholic Biblical Federation  
is an "international Catholic organization of a public  
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## Editorial

Even without being a chef I know how time consuming it is to prepare a certain delicious sauce. It's only after long efforts of mixing the ingredients that the sauce all of a sudden takes on the appearance and taste one expects. Finally, the ingredients are blended together to form a smooth delicious cream.

Excuse this comparison, but it came to my mind when composing this issue of the *BULLETIN DEI VERBUM*. Today, after many efforts to make the Bible reading easily accessible, I have the impression that, within the regions of the Federation, something is coming to the fore which I would like to call a pastoral reading of the Bible. It is a reading which at the same time is popular, open to everyone and still tied into the actual life context of the reader. One year after the Plenary Assembly of Bogotá, the new Executive Committee evaluated this new approach (p. 4-8).

The historical critical method contributed very much to the understanding of biblical texts and allowed it to escape from fundamentalistic snares. Nonetheless, this does not suffice. Another goal must likewise be pursued: How to allow the largest number of faithful possible both personal and community access to the Bible as the source of their faith. Those responsible for adult catechesis in Italy have addressed this problem head on (p. 14-16).

Along the same lines, Bishop Onaiyekan reminded the Synod of Bishops in October of 1990, that the necessary academic biblical training of future priests must go hand in hand with pastoral formation for the biblical apostolate (p. 13).

The celebration of Bible Sunday or Bible Month can be excellent means to promote the biblical-pastoral ministry in a diocese or parish. The practice of Bible Sunday or Bible Month, long established in some countries of Latin America, should prove this point sufficiently. (p. 10-12). The Final Statement of Bogotá likewise recommends it, and Bishop Ablondi untiringly pursues his campaign in favor of Bible Week, most recently in a letter to the Pope (p. 9).

Marc Sevin

# THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE JUNE 1991

The Executive Committee of the Catholic Biblical Federation, elected during the Plenary Assembly of Bogotá in July 1990, met from the seventh to thirteenth of June 1991, in Stuttgart, Germany.

## The Participants

### The Ex-Officio Members:

- . Monsignor Alberto Ablondi, Bishop of Livorno, President of the Federation
- . Don Pier Francesco Fumagalli, Representative of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity
- . Prof. Bernard Krautter, President of the Administrative Board

### Representatives of the Full Members:

- . Bishop Cornelius Esua, Cameroon, for Africa
- . Bishop Mario de Gasperin, Mexico, for the Americas
- . Fr. Dominic Chan Chi Ming, Hong Kong, for Asia/Oceania
- . Fr. Marijan Jerko Fucak, OFM, Yugoslavia, for Europe/Middle East

### Representatives of the Associate Members:

- . Fr. Geoffrey King, SJ, East Asian Pastoral Institute, Manila, Phillipines, Moderator of the Executive Committee
- . Sr. Rosana Pulga, FSP, Archdiocese of Belo Horizonte, Brazil

### Invited Guests:

- . Dr. Norbert Höslinger, Austria, Subregional Coordinator for Central and Eastern Europe
- . Mr. Jos Rijks, Germany, Treasurer of the Administrative Board

### Secretariat of Stuttgart:

- . Fr. Ludger Feldkämper, SVD, General Secretary; Fr. Florencio Galindo, CM; Mr. Heinz Köster; Fr. Piet Rijks, CSSP; Miss Christa Wehr.

## The Program

The following were the themes of the Committee meeting:

- The presentation of and follow-up discussions on various reports.
- Various matters concerning the following-up on the Plenary Assembly of Bogotá.

- Information and reflection on the life of the Federation.
- Legal and financial questions.

## Reports

- **Bishop Ablondi** led the Executive Committee in a meditation on the theme of the last Plenary Assembly, „Behold, I make all things new“, suggesting signs indicating the newness of God today. He recalled the importance of the Final Statement of Bogotá, and then drew attention to his letter to the Pope, on „Reasons for promoting Bible weeks or months“, (You will find the text of this letter on page 9 of this Bulletin).

Bishop Ablondi mentioned in his report that he sent a telegram of congratulations to Archbishop Cassidy, the President of the Pontifical Council for Christian Unity, on the occasion of his elevation to the Cardinalat. The Council for Promoting Christian Unity is the liaison of the Federation to the Vatican.

- **Fr. Fumagalli** reported that the *Information Service* of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity had published the Final Statement of Bogotá as well as the new Constitution of the Catholic Biblical Federation.

The Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity has devoted one of its working sessions to the Federation. Further consideration was given to the question regarding relations with the United Bible Societies.

- With the help of a chart, **Fr. Feldkämper** explained the structure of the Catholic Biblical Federation as recognized by the Holy See and incorporated in the Federal Republic of Germany. He dwelt on the different bodies of the Federation and on the departments of the Secretariat in Stuttgart, along with their respective functions (see page 8). He then presented the official annual report of the General Secretariat, which was formally accepted by the Executive Committee.

## Follow-up to the Plenary Assembly in Bogotá

1. The Executive Committee approved both the minutes of the Plenary Assembly of Bogotá and of its first meeting after the Assembly.

2. Developments in the Regions  
Here is a summary of news items about the regions, given in the report of the General Secretary and supplemented by information from the representatives of the regions.

### EUROPE

- In spite of the enormous difficulties, such as lack of personnel, new possibilities have opened up for the biblical-pastoral ministry in the countries of Eastern Europe. On the 3rd of June 1991, representatives of the United Bible Societies and of the

Catholic Biblical Federation met in Vienna, in order to study the possibilities of a closer collaboration between the Bible Societies and the Federation, in view of the biblical-pastoral ministry to the Churches of Central Europe and Eastern Europe. It was decided to publish a common declaration on the relationship and the goal of the two organizations for the Churches in Eastern Europe. (see pp.20)

. The Final Statement of Bogotá has also been translated into Croatian.

. A meeting of the members of the Federation in the Subregion of the „Latin“-European countries will be held in Milan, Italy in October of 1991.

. Monsignor Naguib, Coordinator of the Subregion of the Middle East, asked to be replaced for health reasons.

**ASIA / OCEANIA**

. Miss Cecilia Chui, Coordinator for the Subregion of Northeast Asia, is laying the groundwork for a structured collaboration between the members of the subregion. The first meeting will be held at the end of October 1991.

. The Final Statement of Bogotá has been translated into Chinese and Korean.

. A Month of the Bible was celebrated in Hong Kong in December 1990, commemorating also the 25th anniversary of Dei Verbum.

. In Korea 1,000 promoters of the Bible, mainly lay people, completed a four month formation course under the theme, „The New Evangelization and the Bible in the Catholic Church of Korea.“

. 10,000 copies of the Old Testament, in the translation of the Franciscans of Hong Kong, were printed in Beijing and 1,500 copies of scriptural reading guides were distributed in Mainland China.

. The leaders of the biblical apostolate in Papua New Guinea are very active in the formation of lay leaders. Last year they organized a „Mini-Nemi Course“ in English. This course was modelled after the *DEI VERBUM* Biblical-Pastoral Course of Nemi, Italy and adapted to the needs of the country. Two more courses are scheduled in Pidgin.

. In the Philipines, different groups have been formed to study the Final Statement of Bogotá. A course to prepare leaders for the biblical apostolate in the Asian context is also in preparation.

**AFRICA**

. A regional meeting is planned for January - February 1992.

. A report on the Plenary Assembly in Bogotá has been submitted to the Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar (SECAM), and all of its members have received the Final Statement of Bogotá.

. Three sessions and a course on biblical formation have been organized for the All-African Council of the Laity, in working towards their goals.

. The Fifth Congress of African Exegetes took place in Abidjan, Ivory Coast, this past July.

. A course, similar to the one of Nemi, for the leaders of the biblical-pastoral ministry in Francophone Africa, is planned to be held in Abidjan by 1993.

**THE AMERICAS**

. The Catholic Biblical Association of Canada, (Société Catholique de la Bible; SOCABI), celebrated the 50th Anniversary of its foundation (see pp. 19 of this bulletin).

. The activities of the Federation in the United States could be reinforced.

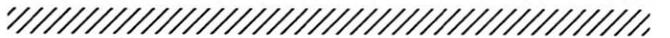
. Fr. César Mora Paz, Coordinator of the Subregion of Latin America, since the last Plenary Assembly, handed in his resignation for health reasons. He was succeeded by Fr. Gérardo Mellert, SVD.

. A „global plan“ of action for the members of the Federation, published in Bulletin Dei Verbum No. 18, was worked out last year during the first workshop of the Latin American Zonal Coordinators, held in Mexico.

. The Biblical-Pastoral Commission of Mexico had the Final Statement of Bogotá published in the Bulletin of the Bishops' Conference.

. The First National Congress for the Biblical-Pastoral Ministry of Mexico will be held in August 1991, and is being prepared in all the dioceses.

. After the Plenary Assembly of Bogotá, a team was set-up to assist the Zonal Coordinator of Brazil. The Final Statement of Bogotá has been published and will be studied by all the Bible groups of the country during the month of September, which is their Bible Month. The theme will be, „St. Paul, a worker and an evangelizer“, on which seventy thousand booklets have been printed. In Brazil, one can observe that lay people desire not only to read the Bible, but also to reach a deeper appreciation of its message. Due to lack of funding, the biblical-pastoral ministry cannot respond to all the needs of this country.



**Recommendations**



It is up to the Members of the Federation to set their own priorities in implementing the resolutions of the Final Statement of Bogotá. The Executive Committee, however, passes on to the members of the Federation, the results of its proposed priorities on its own actions:

1. Concientization
  - further the conscientization of lay people
  - make the Final Statement better known

- fulfill the recommendation concerning the cancellation of foreign debts (8.3.5.4)
  - use of the Bible as an instrument for liberation
  - organize the Bible Sunday (Week/Month/Year)
2. Production of new materials
    - print Bibles at low cost
    - prepare faithful translations, which are, at the same time, adapted to the readers
  3. Formation
    - train multipliers
    - favor the formation of lay people
    - underline the theme „Bible and family“
    - promote the importance of the Bible in education
    - show in what ways the Bible is an instrument for liberation
    - denounce the dangers of Fundamentalism and the sects
    - form promoters of Bible Sunday (week/month/year)
  4. Structures
    - initiate or strengthen the regional and subregional structures for better coordination
    - set-up the structures for biblical-pastoral work
  5. Research
 

Examination of fundamentalism and the sects must be pursued further.
  6. Concerted efforts to be pursued
    - exert influence on Bishops' Conferences and related organizations for a Synod of Bishops on the Bible and the biblical-pastoral ministry. Isolated initiatives are not sufficient. Action on all the levels is required, such as, on the level of the regional synods (Europe, Africa) and of the regional organizations of Bishops' Conferences (FABC; CELAM, etc.).
    - intensify the organization of Bible Sunday (or Week, Month, Year).
    - present to the governments the recommendations of the Plenary Assembly regarding cancellation of foreign debts after the model of the biblical Jubilee Year.

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### The New Members

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The Executive Committee has examined the applications for associate memberships in the Federation. The following organizations were accepted as new members:

#### AFRICA

##### • Cameroon

##### The Catholic Womens' Association

This Catholic lay movement was born in 1964. Uniting Catholic women of all social classes, its prime objective is to enrich the

spirituality and the social life of its members by helping them to deepen their Catholic faith, to have a better understanding of the Church's liturgy and to make them more conscious of their responsibility as Christian women and citizens.

This movement is organized on the level of parishes, zones, sectors, dioceses, and the country. Among its many activities are the spiritual formation of its members, a program of development and social services.

This association has decided to make the biblical apostolate an essential element of its action program.

*For further information:* Catholic Womens' Association (CWA), Bamenda Diocese, CWA Office Bayelle, P.O. Box 113, Mandon-Bamenda, NW Province, Cameroon

##### • Nigeria

##### The Catholic Institute of West Africa

This Institute of higher learning specializes in theological studies and related disciplines. It was founded by the Association of the Episcopal Conferences of the Anglophone Countries of West Africa (Nigeria, Ghana, Sierra Leone, Liberia and Gambia).

The goal of the Institute is to train and educate the leaders in the Church of the anglophone subregion of West Africa. It trains the future professors of the minor and major seminaries, the directors of the formation houses, and the administrative personnel in dioceses and houses of religious.

The emphasis is placed on inculturation and „theology in context“. Biblical studies command an important position. The Institute may become the first Catholic University of West Africa.

*For further information:* Catholic Institute of West Africa, P.O. Box 499, Port Harcourt, Nigeria

#### THE AMERICAS

##### • Argentina

##### The Society of the Divine Word - Eastern Province, Argentina

The Eastern Province of the Society of the Divine Word (Divine Word Missionaries) in Argentina, has adopted the proposal of the 1988 general chapter, which declared the biblical-pastoral ministry to be one of the priorities of the Society. One member of the Province has been appointed to coordinate the work of the biblical apostolate on a full-time basis. He has already been active in organizing seminars, Bible weeks, workshops and more. The creation of a biblical center is envisioned.

*For further information:* Provincia Argentina Este SVD, Casa del Verbo Divino, San Marcos 4069, Suc. 1, Cas. 4, 3300 Posadas, Prov. Misiones, República de Argentina

## • Bolivia

### The Conference of Religious Men and Women of Bolivia

The Conference of Religious Men and Women (CBR), of Bolivia, comprises 1,600 sisters and 800 religious men in 375 communities. It is involved in the biblical apostolate in different ways.

Among their principal objectives of this domain are:

- Providing materials for a personal and communitarian reading of the Bible
- Bible study in accord with the social and cultural level of each person, in an effort to work towards the construction of a new world
- Reading and meditation of the Bible in small groups
- Exchange of experiences in the field of the biblical apostolate
- Interconfessional dialogue based on the Bible.

The CBR has elaborated for its members a plan of permanent biblical formation (see pp. 16 of this Bulletin).

*For further information:* Conferencia Boliviana de Religiosas y Religiosos (CBR), Cap. Castrillo No. 409 (esquina Av. 20 de Octubre), Casilla 8681, La Paz, Bolivia

## • Colombia

### San José Major Seminary of Cucuta

Under the direction of Fr. Jaime Mora Rivera, the major seminary San José of Cucuta is particularly sensitive to the biblical-pastoral ministry. The seminary is the center for the biblical assemblies of the city and the neighboring region. It offers its help to various organizations in charge of catechesis and of the biblical formation of the faithful.

*For further information:* Seminario Mayor San José de Cucuta, Apartado Aéreo 040, San José Cucuta, Colombia

## • Mexico

### Catholic Federation of Biblical Formation Centers

Spread over the 77 dioceses of Mexico, there are 23 centers of biblical formation. Of these, 17 have joined together to form a federation. The members of this federation collaborate in their efforts, that Sacred Scripture may occupy the place it deserves in daily life and in evangelization. It also aims at furthering the biblical formation of people working in the biblical centers.

*For further information:* Federación Católica de Centros de Formación Bíblica (FeCCeFoBi), Tecoyotla 88, Colonia Florida, 01030 Mexico, D.F., México

## • Peru

### The Missionaries of the Holy Bible

The goal of this congregation, founded in 1981, is the reading and the meditation, the study and distribution of the Sacred

Scripture, primarily the New Testament. Thus, the Bible becomes a moral example to nourish the faith and liturgical life of the faithful.

The Sisters have founded several biblical centers at the parish level.

*For further information:* Hermanas Misioneras de la Sagrada Biblia, Casa Grande, Trujillo, Perú

## ASIA / OCEANIA

### • Manila

#### National Catholic Bible Center

The center originated in 1971 as the „Catholic Bible Center“. At that time it was the only center of its kind in the country. When the Episcopal Commission of the Biblical Apostolate was organized in 1987, it adopted the center to be its action arm and raised it to national level.

*For further information:* Fr. Efren Rivera, OP, NCBC, Fathers' Residence, University of St. Thomas, España Street, Manila, Philippines

## EUROPE / MIDDLE EAST

### • Italy

#### The Sisters of Our Lady of the Missions

This international missionary congregation is active in 18 countries and has a variety of tasks. In Papua New Guinea and the Northeast of India, for example, the Sisters work at primary evangelization, whereas in numerous places in the first world they are active in adult catechesis. Many of the Sisters are catechists in parishes. The congregation finds itself very much involved in the biblical-pastoral ministry.

*For further information:* Sisters of our Lady of the Missions (Suore di Nostra Signora delle Missioni), Casa Generalizia, Via di Bravetta 628, 00164 Roma, Italy

### • Yugoslavia

#### Pastoralna Kultura - PAK

This organization is dedicated to the pastoral ministry in its many facets: spirituality, liturgy, the Bible, family and sacred art. In the area of the Bible, the PAK organized three sessions last year on the ecumenical and pastoral experiences of biblical groups. The PAK provides biblical formation to its animators. It is preparing a Bible week for next fall. It publishes a bulletin with a rubric of reflections on biblical books.

*For further information:* Pastoralna Kultura, c/o Dragica Turkalj-Loncar, IV. Trnjanski zavojbr. 1, 41000 Zagreb, Yugoslavia

• **Switzerland**

**Diocesan Biblical Pastoral Center, St. Gallen**

This diocesan biblical center, founded in 1989, together with and under the Biblical Center of Zurich for German speaking Switzerland, coordinates the biblical-pastoral ministries of the diocese. The center offers formation courses on various levels, organizes seminars, Bible weeks, etc.

*Further information:* Bibelpastorale Arbeitsstelle St. Gallen, Klosterhof 6B, 9000 St. Gallen, Switzerland



**Other Questions**



The Executive Committee handled legal and financial questions touching the Federation and its Secretariat in Stuttgart. It dealt

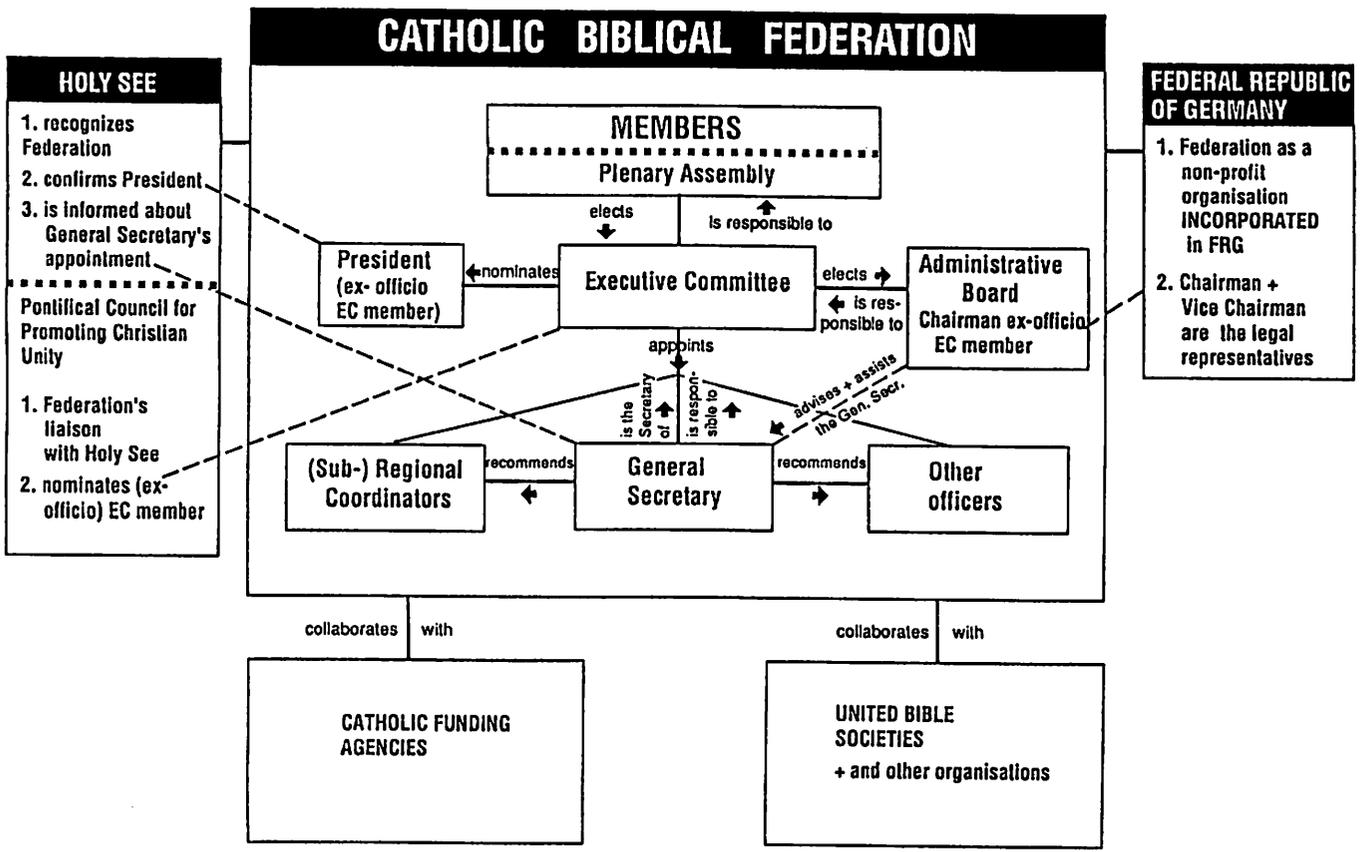
with the registration of the Federation as a non-profit organization in Germany, treated the question of the membership fee, and examined the budget of the General Secretariat.

The new encyclical letter "Centesimus Annus" may be a challenge to the biblical apostolate. The Federation should draw attention to the biblical references and the biblical foundations of the document.

In 1994, the Federation will celebrate the 25th anniversary of its existence. This could be a good occasion to make the work of the Federation better known.

Fr. Feldkämper has again been reinstated as General Secretary of the Federation, and will serve another three year term (1993-1996).

The next meeting of the Executive Committee will take place in Rome, in June of 1993.



## FOLLOW-UP TO THE BOGOTÁ ASSEMBLY

*In this section we will publish commentaries on the Final Statement and news on the life of the Federation in the wake of the Bogotá Assembly and the progress of the guidelines made at the Assembly.*

*„We again stress the importance of Bible Sundays, Bible weeks, months or years in the life of the parishes and dioceses“.*

Final Statement of Bogotá,  
Practical Recommendations (8.3.4.3)

### Why Bible Week or Month?

One of the recommendations of the Final Statement of Bogotá is that the Bible Sunday, Week, Month or Year, should be promoted. On the occasion of a private audience, Bishop Ablondi, President of the Federation, submitted the following „Pro-Memoria“ on this concern of the Federation, to Pope John Paul II.

#### Reasons for further promoting Bible Week or Month

**I. The Holy Father, in his letter** sent to the Catholic Biblical Federation's Plenary Assembly in Bogotá in July of 1990, recommended the celebration of Bible week or month. The Final Statement of the Assembly confirms this recommendation in three different places.

#### II. The reasons for and value of this recommendation

1. To give greater value to the liturgical readings, which are often not heard, understood and remembered
2. To give the opportunity to educate towards a personal reading of the Bible
3. To give, through the Bible, continuation to the celebration of the sacraments in life
4. To give an appropriate biblical foundation for those involved in the ministry of catechesis and charitable works
5. To offer, through the Bible, an easily grasped method for adult catechesis
6. To contribute, through the Bible, to the tasks of the New Evangelization, in which the eternal newness of the Bible must meet with the many new aspects of a changing humanity
7. To reach, with the knowledge of the Bible, an authentic inculturation of the divine message

8. To give a biblical foundation, according to the example of the Holy Father, to the social doctrine of the Church

9. To illuminate, with the Bible, situations and needs, so that they may be viewed under the light of the Holy Spirit and guided by the teaching office of the Church.

10. To form Bible groups, which may draw vitality from the celebration of Bible week or month. These groups will constitute an efficient counterbalance to the corrosion of the sects.

11. To deepen collaboration on the ecumenical level

12. To prepare for interreligious dialogue, above all, in the regions where other religions are present and have their own „sacred books“

13. To illuminate, with the Bible, different callings and human situations, the weeks or months of the Bible may deal with different themes, for example: „The Bible and Youth“, „The Bible and the Family“, „The Bible and the Aged“, and „The Bible and Suffering“.

14. To educate and spread the Word of God, so that all Christians, and above all, the poor in so many countries, may have access to the Bible.

The Federation could contribute towards the Bible weeks and Bible months by assisting in their realization, facilitating the exchange of different experiences and offering advice for the various initiatives.

(The original text is in Italian)

## BIBLE SUNDAY (WEEK / MONTH) IN LATIN AMERICA

The Final Statement of the Plenary Assembly of the Federation in Bogotá, in July of 1990, is in a way the common declaration of the members of the Federation. Among the primary means towards giving the biblical apostolate its proper place in the life of the Church, the Final Statement recommends the celebration of the Bible Sunday/week/month/year. Bishop Ablondi, President of the Federation, has repeatedly made efforts to promote this practice on a global level.

Guided by this determination, the Secretariat in Stuttgart sent a questionnaire last year to all the members of the Federation. The goal was to gather and publish information on programs that have already been implemented, so that the experiences of some might inspire others as well. We thank all of those members who took out time to answer the questionnaire. Bulletin Dei Verbum will present the results of this inquiry in several issues. We begin this time with a summary of the information we received from Latin America.

Thirty-one questionnaires were sent out, sixteen answers were received back. These provide a good overview of the excellent work done in the Catholic Church through means of the Bible Sunday/week/month/year.

### The responses came from:

- National Biblical Associations: Uruguay, Peru, Bolivia, Chile, Brazil and Argentina (6)
- Diocesan or Inter-Diocesan Centers: Medellín in Colombia, Lima in Peru, Quilmes in Argentina, Sao Paulo in Brazil (4)
- Religious Orders: Obra de Cooperación Parroquial de Christo Rey in Argentina, Daughters of St. Paul in Brazil, Capuchins in Mexico, Society of the Divine Word in Ecuador (4)
- Institute: Institute of Sacred Scripture in Mexico (1)
- Foundations: Foundation of the Word of Life in Buenos Aires, Argentina (1)

Note that the influence of a diocesan center may easily cross the limits of a diocese. Likewise, a religious order often crosses the borders of the country where it works.

### A tradition that grows

In reading the responses from Latin America, the impression is given that the practice of Bible Sunday and

above all Bible week, has already become a firmly established tradition, especially in the past few years.

One need not always start with the full program! Whereas one country or diocese might organize a Bible week or a Bible month, another one may choose to have a Sunday designated as a Bible Sunday or „Day of the Bible“.

In March of 1961, the Bishops' Conference of Argentina proposed a Bible Sunday on the national level. In the diocese of Quilmes, in Argentina, the first Bible Sunday was celebrated in 1976, and the first Bible Week in 1985. In September, the biblical apostolate in Brazil will celebrate Bible Month for the twentieth time.

Since 1962, the biblical movement in Chile, has provided materials for a Bible week every year, that is developed on the national level. It is held during the week closest to the feast of St. Jerome on the 30th of September.

The Capuchins in Mexico, inaugurated the first Bible week five years ago. The National Biblical Pastoral Commission of Uruguay is in its fourth year of promoting a Month of the Bible, in the course of which a Sunday is especially designated as „Day of the Bible“. Bolivia held its first „Day of the Bible“ in 1990.

The vast majority of these celebrations remain within a Catholic setting. The participation, if at all, of other Christian communities is very limited (to an encounter, or a common prayer service in the course of a Bible week for example).

## Objectives

The objectives aimed at by these organizations are formulated differently, but the concerns behind these goals are often interrelated.

- "Help to read the Bible within the Catholic spirituality, in the light of Dei Verbum. The hermeneutical criteria of the reading, both christological and ecclesiastical are highlighted". (Argentina)

„Help the communities and the faithful to read in a manner that furthers the cause of liberation; help to facilitate a reading that leads to conversion.“ (Brazil)

- "To awaken and promote among the people a participation in the concerns of the local Latin American and Universal Church. The formation of the life of the Christian community and the biblical apostolate in accordance with the message of the Bible." (Equador)

- "Prepare and ready the people for a vital encounter with the Word of God." (Brazil)

- "That all the people of God be nourished by the Word of God towards a more solid faith. The accent is placed on two aspects, to know and savor the Word of the Lord and to reinforce faith through a serious reading based on solid scholarship." (Chile)

- "To know the Bible is to know Jesus. The objective is to discover the Bible as a book which reveals Jesus Christ to us. God's revelation through Jesus is emphasized. People are invited to join in Bible groups in order to know and live the Word of God." (Uruguay)

- "We work towards an overall knowledge of the Bible and propose a reading method in view of deepening the Word in the Sunday Liturgy and creating a more active involvement in the life of the Church." (Argentina)

- "Distribution of the Bible. A better reading of Holy Scripture. The establishment of new Bible groups. To further a spiritual and solidly grounded Bible reading. Among the principle themes are: the history of salvation and current history, the Bible and the Christian community, the Bible and prayer, the Bible and solidarity." (Argentina)

- "We look at the situation of our believers who, on their way, are torn between hope and despair. To place the Bible in their hands, so that the Good News Jesus brings us may nourish the life of our oppressed people and may support the transformation of their situation. The aspect we stress most is that the Bible is not an account of past history but a mirror of our own history showing a way to

continue bringing about our own liberation, according to the example of the people of Israel." (Bolivia)

- "That the participants know the documents of the teaching office of the Church concerning biblical questions. To support the desire of the Holy Father for a new evangelization and to bring about a renewed appreciation of the Good News of the Word of God, particularly in Holy Scripture. We aim at confirming this Good News of salvation, announced by Jesus to the world and at being witnesses of the love of God, in words and actions. We support the study of the often neglected elements of Dei Verbum, as it has been recommended by the Final Statement of Bogotá. We initiate reflection in groups on issues that have the greatest influence on our environment. We promote personal reflection on the texts which make us change our lives." (Mexico)

- "To bring people closer to the Bible, granting them, by means of simple language based on serious exegesis, a vital comprehension of the texts which leads to answering in their lives the invitation which God extends to us through his Word." (Colombia)

- "A prayerful and communitarian reading of the Bible." (Brazil)

- "So far, our principal objective has been to create, among the people of God, a sense of awareness of the principal place of the Bible in Christian life, so that both personally, and in the community one could find therein a source of renewal. We try to get Christians to take the Bible in their hands. During Mass the readings should be presented in such a way that one learns to read the Bible as related to life." (Uruguay)

## Themes

The biblical celebrations of Bible Sunday, week or month, may concentrate on a general introduction to Bible reading and on methods of reading, or they may deal with particular themes in connection with the local situation. As an example, we present here the program of a Bible week in the Archdiocese of Lima

1. General introduction to the Bible; 2. The parts and the composition of the Bible; 3. The Bible; Word of God; 4. The Old Testament; 5. The New Testament; 6. How to read the Bible

In Chile, the themes of Bible week are those of the history of salvation. Elsewhere, the Council Document Dei Verbum and/or the Final Statement of Bogotá have been chosen as a basis for reflection. Other options are: a meditation on the place of Christ in Bible reading, on the relation of Bible and liturgy etc.

## Organization and Means

On the national level, it is primarily the permanent offices of the national commissions who propose the theme and materials of the celebration of Bible Sundays, weeks and months. On the diocesan level this preparation is often done by the members of the diocesan commission charged with the biblical apostolate, or with catechesis. More and more lay teams are involved in the preparation. It is remarkable progress that the organization of Bible Sunday, or Bible week is often the concerted effort of people and movements sharing in different ways responsibility in the Church. It is no longer the sole business of specialists in the biblical apostolate.

Every year the bulletin of the Latin American subregion „La Palabra Hoy“ (The Word Today), publishes one issue with practical suggestions on how to organize a Bible week.

The dates chosen for Bible Sunday/week vary greatly from one place to another. Some take advantage of the liturgical seasons, like Advent and Lent. Others institute several Bible weeks in the course of one year.

The responses to our questionnaire do not clarify how the programs were implemented, nor if the goals have been achieved. Among the means most often quoted are the following:

- The preparation of texts, booklets, or posters to prepare and better follow the Bible Sunday, week/month/year.
- A ceremony of enthronement of the Bible, to mark the opening of the event
- prayer vigils
- Bible sharing sessions
- Competitions of songs and drawings aimed at the younger participants
- Exhibits explaining the Bible and biblical materials
- Music festivals of biblical inspiration

Most often, the biblical programs are an occasion to offer to the participants a chance to acquire or buy Bibles and related texts (booklets, reviews) at an affordable price.

## Desires

Here and there one notes suggestions to improve the biblical events: to facilitate a better coordination on the national level (Uruguay), to strengthen ecumenical collaboration (Bolivia). Some organizations suggest the possibility „to obtain Bibles at a cheap price for the poorest in the community“ (Argentina, Chile).

There are no lack of plans to improve the existing practice. In Uruguay, the celebration of Bible weeks makes it possible to plan a national meeting on the Bible: its use, its difficulties and methods of reading. Likewise, a theological week on the Council Document Dei Verbum is envisioned.

## Results

• All the answers to our questionnaire note a real benefit from the practice of Bible Sunday/week/month.

• “We mark positively that the interest of the people in the Bible is rising, and practically all parishes celebrate the Bible Month, even if they concentrate their celebration on a particular Sunday. Numerous groups and communities begin to organize exhibits, songs or parish days of different kinds. The participation is great. During Bible month all sectors of the pastoral ministry give special attention to the Bible. That is why it is difficult to pinpoint an immediate result.” (Uruguay)

• “Without any doubt the Bible weeks have awakened among Catholics a much greater interest for the Bible... Often the work of a Bible group lacks follow-up. The success of the Bible week depends upon the activities and the initiatives of the people locally responsible for the pastoral ministry...” (Colombia)

• “Faith becomes more serious and solid.” (Chile).

• “Greater distribution of the Bible. Assistance for a better reading of Sacred Scripture. Starting Bible circles.” (Argentina)

• “The enthusiasm for the proposed reading method continues to grow.” (Argentina)

• “One observes an ever increasing thirst for the Word of God, especially among the youth. Each family possesses now one or several Bibles. The common preparation allows also for a better collaboration of those holding a special responsibility in the Church and with representatives of other ecclesiastical movements.” (Brazil)

• “The interest in the Word has grown considerably.” (Brazil, Uruguay, Bolivia)

• “Numerous groups and communities begin to organize themselves in order to take part in the Bible Month. All the sectors of the diocese give much more attention to the Word.” (Uruguay)

• “The effect produced is very difficult to describe. It is indeed as grand and as variable as the activity of the Spirit of Jesus itself!” (Brazil)

• “The Bible months helps to motivate and awaken the interest of the community in the Word of God.” (Uruguay)

• “The Bible weeks celebrated on the level of parishes and dioceses will help in proposing a Bible week on the national level.” (Peru)

• “A much greater interest in a reading of the Word which is both historical and leads to the transformation of our reality.” (Bolivia)

• “The participation of the clergy and the religious has grown... Thanks to the greater awareness as a result of Bible week we can now engage in a new epoch of work in our biblical center...” (Equador)

## THE PLACE OF SACRED SCRIPTURE IN THE FORMATION OF PRIESTS

*The last Synod of Bishops (30 Sept. - 28. Oct. 1990) was dedicated to the training of seminarians and priests. Msgr. John Onaiyekan, Coadjutor Bishop of Abuja, Nigeria, former Executive Committee member of our Federation, pointed out the urgency, within the pastoral formation of future priests, of their preparation for the biblical apostolate. Here follows the text of his intervention, which he gave in the name of the Bishops of Nigeria.*

"... First and foremost, we would like to emphasize the importance of training priests to be ardent lovers and effective ministers of the Word of God in Sacred Scripture. My observation will be against the recent experience of the Church in Nigeria on this matter.

The Instrumentum Laboris makes passing references to the Word of God at various points: i.e. No's 7, 10, 21, 29, 41. I wish to draw special attention to two references. First, no. 32 on „Lectio Divina“, as nourishment for spiritual life and a „unifying factor in the spiritual journey“ of the priest. Secondly, no. 45, on the „specific preparation“ called for by the „service of the Word“.

During Vatican II, the great importance of Sacred Scripture in the training and life of priests was often insisted upon (i.e. OT 8, 10; PO 4; DV 24, 25). This has been reemphasized in several post-Vatican II official documents of the Church.

After all this wealth of documents and guidelines, how far have we reached in practice?

In Nigeria, we have made serious efforts to implement these recommendations. The theological programs of the seminary have been revised to give Scripture a priority of place and make it the „soul of theology“. Experts have been trained, and now give our seminarians the most up-to-date biblical information. All of this, however, is heavily academic. Scientific exegesis is good and useful. In itself, however, it is not enough to lead the seminarian and the priest to discover „the force and power in the Word of God“ (DV 21).

Then, when we turn our attention to the people of God at the grass roots level, we see something else happening. We see an explosion of enthusiasm for the Bible at all levels. This is largely the result of Vatican II ideas such as: „easy access to Sacred Scripture for all the Christian faithful“, (DV 22); „more Scripture in the renewed Liturgy, and in the vernacular“, (SC

36, 51); the biblical dimension of the charismatic renewal movement and the positive aspects of greater ecumenical communication with Protestants.

Our lay faithful complain that the priests are not sufficiently aware of their great thirst for the Word of God. Indeed, many priests have no time for the biblical apostolate. Others lack the will and skills to reach the people where they are. The few who are able and willing are often drafted into other areas of the apostolate.

The price we pay for this neglect is high. Many turn elsewhere to fulfill their thirst for the Word of God in pools that are often dirty and poisoned. They fall easy prey to anti-Catholic fundamentalist sects who, with the Bible as bait, lure them away from the true faith. The youth are especially vulnerable. From my affiliation with the Catholic Biblical Federation, this phenomenon is found not only in Nigeria, but in many parts of the world.

### What is the solution?

a. The solution cannot be to discourage or, less still, kill the peoples' enthusiasm for the Bible. Rather, we should promote it while channeling it in the right direction.

b. Priestly training, both initial and on-going, must seek to meet this serious challenge. I am convinced that it can begin doing this by bringing Scripture down from the head to the heart. If all priests cannot be Scripture scholars, every priest must be a Scripture lover and in that sense, a Bible expert among the people of God.

c. All available means should be utilized to make the Scriptures a living book within the seminary, at both the personal and community levels (i.e. Bible sharing sessions, celebrations etc.).

d. Academic study of the Bible remains important. The ultimate objective, however, should be to gain greater familiarity with and love for the Word of God, for personal nourishment and service of the Word. Thus, striking a happy balance between dry rationalism and crass fundamentalism.

e. Finally, there should be a greater emphasis on the pastoral application of Scriptures to the life of the people: in prayer, liturgy and catechetics, as well as in concrete life decisions and situations. The priest must also learn to listen with the people to Scriptures in which God often speaks to us through „mere children, things hidden from the wise and prudent“. Hence, the need to train others to lead in Bible study and sharing.

For six years I taught Scripture to candidates for the priesthood. I now confess that I did not train my students to meet these challenges. This Synod ought to remind those now teaching in the seminaries of the need to shift the scriptural emphasis. This shift should also reach those centers where the seminary Scripture teachers are trained (i.e. the Biblicum and other institutions).

## Other suggestions

- More facilities for pastoral training in the biblical apostolate, for both priests and other ministers of the Word, in the context of continuing education. The „Dei Verbum“ program, run by the SVD in Nemi, is a good example.

- Above all, greater conviction on the part of the Church authorities, that the biblical apostolate deserves a high priority. A biblical commission at the national and diocesan levels is highly recommended for those where none exists.

## Conclusion

Vatican II has brought the Bible to the people of God. There is no stopping it now. The only way is forward, guided by the rich intuitions of that Council, especially of Dei Verbum. The 1985 extra-ordinary synod remarked that this council document has been „too neglected“. To remedy this neglect, I humbly propose

a synod of Bishops on the Bible in the life and mission of the Church and it should be held soon.

*In the course of the Synod, Msgr. Joseph Satoshi Fukahori, Bishop of Takamastu, Japan, stressed that numerous Christians search for a more profound knowledge of the Scriptures, he subsequently supported the demands put forward by Bishop Onaiyekan. These Christians, the Japanese Bishop added, are not satisfied in their search for biblical instruction, because the priests are not adequately prepared for this task. As a consequence, many of the faithful leave the Catholic Church and join the sects. The Synod should emphasize how important it is that seminarians comprehend the deeper meaning of Sacred Scripture and accentuate their personal growth in the Word of God.*



## INQUIRY IN ITALY: BIBLE AND CATECHESIS OF ADULTS

*To gain a better overview of the biblical apostolate in the country, the National Catechetical Office in Italy has begun an inquiry in all of its dioceses. We publish here the questionnaire that was sent to the diocesan directors of catechesis.*

## The Bible in our ecclesial communities

The concern for adults and their catechetical instruction, has become a priority for the Catholic Church in Italy today. An important way of faith we meet in our parishes is that of Bible groups, especially of Gospel groups. During a recent National Congress for the Biblical Apostolate, it was a joy to discover that a great number of Bible groups exist and that there is a desire for more.

In order to make more adults in other parishes benefit from this way of faith through closer contact with the Word of God, it is useful to collect experiences and make them accessible.

For this reason, the following questionnaire was sent to the diocesan catechetical offices, not only to find out the

number of existing Bible groups in the diocese, but also to bring to light more details of their methods and the difficulties they have encountered.

We do not expect numerous responses, but responses that are exact and rich in information; we would also like to receive the materials utilized, (i.e. programs, themes, methods, handouts). We would like to know if and how the Bible group correlates to the catechetical program for Italy, and more widely to an encounter with the Word of God within the Church community, for the sake of the adult's faith formation in a community of mature faith.

For a clear, precise answer it would be necessary to motivate the pastors of parishes (parish priests, assistants and associates) to personally take care of the questionnaire. To accomplish this goal, the catechetical office sends them all the information which will help them to see the meaning of this inquiry.

## I. Description of experiences

### 1. The existing Bible groups

1.1 How many Bible groups of adults exist in the diocese? Please distinguish between the groups of movements and associations, and those of the parishes.

The question aims at Bible groups of adults, though occasionally some youth and/or religious may be present.

Please specify which Bible groups are organizations that extend beyond the parish borders, (groups of catechumens, of congregations of religious etc.) and those which belong to the parishes, districts, and dioceses.

Give numbers as exact as possible of the groups distinguished in this manner (even if you do not know the total number).

1.2 Indicate, as precisely as possible, when and through what impetus these groups were founded (i.e. initiatives of a Bible expert, initiatives of the diocese or of a priest). If possible indicate the number, or average number for each group, the proportion of men and women and the socio-economic status of the participants.

This question articulates five points: When these groups were established, who founded them and why, how large the groups are, the ratio of men to women, and whether they come from the middle class, working class or the poor.

## 2. Functioning of the Bible groups (On the parish level)

### 2.1 Subjects

- What biblical contents were treated in the years 1989 to 1990?
- Do you have an annual program? Can you briefly summarize it and give the reasons that led to its choice?
- Besides the biblical subjects did you treat other issues (i.e. doctrinal subjects, questions on the human condition and burning issues)?
- Which for example?

### 2.2 About the structure of the Bible groups

- How are the meetings structured: frequency, day, hour, duration, location (parish hall, private home)?
- How does the meeting proceed and what are some of its phases or parts?
- Does it follow the steps of the „lectio divina“ or another method?

### 2.3 About the materials and the methods employed:

- How is the Bible used?
- Are there other aids (i.e. books, audiovisual helps, maps...)?

These questions are more open ended, because they coincide directly with the goal of our inquiry, to get to know the experiences in detail. Hence, a broad response concerning the contents, the methods and materials is asked for. We have omitted a question about the goals; in cases where groups have already addressed this question, the response may be added to the report.

## 3. The coordinator/ animator of the Bible groups

3.1 Are there coordinators/animators for the parish Bible groups? If yes, is it ordinarily a priest and/or a lay person? If isn't one, please give the reason.

3.2 Which role does the coordinator/animator actually fulfill in the biblical groups, before, during and after?

The coordinator is fundamental to the success of the group. The questions aim at clarifying what role he/she plays. Here we always refer to the groups on parish level.

## II. The Experiences of Bible groups in their context

### 4. In relation to the pastoral plan of the community

4.1 In the program of the Bible groups, is there an explicit and clear connection with the catechesis of the „Catechism for Adults“?

- If yes, how are they connected? What events coincide?
- If no, are there other connections with catechesis and thus with the theme of faith in the Church, in addition to the Bible?
- If there is no connection, why?

The question is delicate but important, because it tries to place the encounter with the Word of God in the Bible in the global frame of faith, set forth by the Church to be believed and lived by adults in the Christian community. In other words, how can we join the efforts concerning the Bible with the plan of the Church of Italy, for the faith and life of Catholic adults?

4.2 Does there exist, in the encounters of biblical groups, an explicit reference to the celebration to the Word of God, to the liturgy and in general to prayer?

The reference to the ministry of the Word of God implies primarily the service of charity, such as active participation in the life and the services of the community, of the poor, of society.

This question raises another delicate, yet essential point in the dynamics of the Word of God: what its relation is to the liturgy, how it leads to the services of charity for the various needs of the parish (for example the catechesis of children and other areas of parish life), and to the domain of one's profession and life.

## III. Evaluation of the Bible groups

### 5. Positive Aspects

5.1 In the efforts of strengthening the faith of adults, what positive contributions does the encounter with the Bible make?

5.2 What are the reasons adults are interested in biblical meetings? Isn't there, at times, a certain ambiguity in this interest?

These questions focus on the constructive elements of being on the way with the Bible. It would be best to have these elements expressed by the participants themselves. The first part concerns a global evaluation of the formative potential of the Bible holds in faith formation, the second part tries to collect the reasons why the Bible is „successful“ in trying to look at it critically.

## 6. Problems and difficulties

6.1 Do they stem from the biblical subjects selected (degree of difficulty, poor expectations...)?

6.2 Are they derived from the methodology used or from the manner of motivating the group (too serious or deep, alienating „beginners“)?

6.3 Are they the result of the instructional tools used, (scarce, outdated)?

6.4 Did the role of the coordinator/animator cause a problem (insufficiently trained, too authoritative)?

6.5 Was the problem the result of a poor relation with the ecclesial context, be it the catechetical project, or the liturgy or charitable activities (complete separations, a certain snobbishness)?

The questions are interrelated, but answering all of them is essential to gaining a better perception of the actual situation and its difficulties.

## 7. Suggestions

7.1 What particular need do the Bible groups have for their journey of faith? (see no. 6)

7.2 What, from your experiences, can you suggest to those who are planning to form a Bible group in their parish? Where would one start? What needs special attention?

7.3 In view of the catechesis for adults according to the Italian pastoral plan, which elements would have to be integrated into a parish Bible group (i.e. on the level of faith reflection, of celebration, of ecclesial life)?

These suggestions focus on three aspects: 1. the needs which the regional and diocesan catechetical offices could fulfill (i.e. the training of coordinators/animators), 2. advice derived from experience for those who intend to form a Bible group of adults; when and how to begin, 3. the integration of the biblical group with the life and faith of the community, to avoid sterile isolation.

## 8. Active groups

Indicate on this questionnaire the name, address, and phone numbers of the interested parishes (and the name of the parish priest).

(The original text is in Italian)

## NEWS AND INFORMATION

### Bolivia: On-going Formation of Religious Men and Women

The Bolivian Commission for Religious Men and Women (CBR), has planned for its members a program of on-going biblical formation (see page 7), that fills, in their opinion, a need in the life of the religious of Bolivia.

This program is composed of Bible study, organized for and adapted to, the consecrated life in Bolivia. It aims at nourishing, with prayerful readings of the Bible, the spirituality of the religious life. Ultimately it intends to revive an ancient tradition starting with the poor of Latin America, especially of Bolivia. The use of the „Lectio Divina“ introduces some new elements, but its spirit and goal are the same today as yesterday. The reading of the Bible in community will increase the capacity of religious men and women in Bolivia, so they may make their contribution to everything the Church stands for and does as a service to the people of Bolivia.

The plan of formation is a pedagogical guide and program for the reading of the Bible over a period of seven years. The main fruit expected of this effort is the coming to life and deepening

of the „Lectio Divina“, done within the context of the Bolivian people, and the pastoral ministry of the local Church.

The objectives of this plan:

### 1. The general objective

To nourish the life of the religious with the Word of God, read with the reality of the Bolivian people in mind, in order to live and promote their process of liberation, faithful to the Gospel, and being a part of the new evangelization.

### 2. Specific objectives

- To deepen, in the ecclesial, the prophetic vocation of the religious life in Latin America today.
- To better understand the history of the people of the Bible in close relation with the history of the various peoples of Latin America. To highlight the most important stages of the two histories.
- To learn more about Bible reading in community, starting with the situation of the poor; to gain a new methodology of evangelization in accordance with the needs of the Christian communities.
- To stimulate conversion in the life of the religious, in the light of, and challenged by, the Word of God. To express and celebrate conversion as a free gift from God, present and active in our personal, communitarian and social life.
- To explain, with the Bible, the liberating mission of the religious life, expressed in the process of insertion and inculturation.
- To bring to life the message of the Gospel, beginning with the reality and the culture of our people, and in view of building the Reign of God.

g. To strengthen our calling to spreading the Good News, by searching for a more profound knowledge of the Word, in connection with the people and their way of life.

### 3. Methods

- To read the Bible in community, by creating an atmosphere of listening and silence to receive the Word.
- To take into consideration the concrete situation of the people, their problems and hopes, their history and culture, and their global reality.
- To make a study of the biblical text on three levels: literary, historical, theological.

- To complete the study in a celebration of the Word and a concrete commitment to the Word of God.

### 4. Organizational structure

The CBR has appointed a sister as full-time coordinator and has created different teams to make this plan of on-going biblical formation a reality. The dates for meetings have been fixed. The CBR has edited a booklet, as well as some other materials, and it has started a library.

*For further information:* CBR, Calle Capitán Castrillo, #409, Casilla 8681, La Paz, Bolivia

(The original text is in Spanish)

## FROM THE LIFE OF THE FEDERATION

### AFRICA

#### SUDAN - Bible Workshop

In spite of the enormous difficulties resulting from the political situation of the country, the biblical center PALICA in the southern part of Sudan was able to organize a biblical workshop last February with the theme „Women in the Bible“. Thirty-two women, leaders of the various regions in the country, participated.

*For further information:* National Pastoral Liturgical Catechetical Center, (PALICA), P.O. Box 32, Juba, Sudan

### ASIA / OCEANIA

#### New Zealand - „ABIL“ Groups

The Adult Biblical Interdependent Learning, (ABIL), offers a global program for deepening Christian life, on the basis of study and meditation of biblical texts. This program, which originated in the United States, has also proven successful in New Zealand.

*For further information:* ABIL, 15851 N. Lago del Oro Pky, Tucson, Arizona, U.S.A.

### THE AMERICAS

#### Colombia - Bible Week in Lent

Every year, during Lent, the Archdiocese of Medellín organizes a Bible Week around a certain theme. This year, it focused on

„Peace as the Fruit of Justice“. A booklet, edited especially for this event, sets forth the spirit of the week, the method and five themes for reflection.

„The Bible shows us that God is present in the life of the people of Israel. It instructs us how God leads them in difficult moments and saves them in desperate situations. He frees them from the desert, to bring them to the land of freedom. That is why, in order to comprehend the Bible, it is necessary to know the history of ancient Israel, because the text reminds us of the circumstances in which the community lived. The people of Israel had to respond to their own needs, in accord with the will of God, and in the Sacred Books we read of their response. The text reflects some aspects of their situation. Therefore, we must stay close to the biblical text in order to visualize the reality it describes.

This alone does not suffice. We cannot be content in only reconstructing the past. We must see what the text tells us for today, in relation to our situation. We also need the light, and with our own insight we must find our own way. Our reality is one of sin, injustice, need, selfishness and lack of love. Our leaders do not always respond to the needs of the people. Poverty and those in need, count for little in the eyes of the rich. We experience structural disorder. We need change, and the Bible can help us to decide on what to do...“.

• Here is the method recommended for the week:

- Five themes have been chosen for work in groups (parish assemblies, prayer groups, basic communities, meetings for the apostolate).

1. Peace is the fruit of justice
2. A life that corresponds to religious practice
3. Why fast?
4. What is the greatest commandment?
5. Love of neighbor, the only way to peace

- The reflection must lead to personal growth and community involvement. The presence of a facilitator is necessary for the session to run smoothly, and if at all possible, everyone should have a Bible.

a. To begin the session, the facilitator greets the participants and reads Psalm 1.

- b. He/she gives a brief introduction to each text.
- c. One of the participants proclaims the suggested text.
- d. As the case may be, the assembly can be divided into small groups.
- e. Each group has to begin with a reading of the Bible.
- f. Reflection is then stimulated along the lines of the suggested or spontaneous questions. Efforts are made not to deviate from the theme and to reach, in one way or another, practical conclusions.
- g. The participants are invited to express themselves freely and spontaneously.
- h. If the work has been done in small groups, they gather again in plenary session, to share the conclusions of each group.
- i. The assembly should end with a common prayer, in which the ideas and proposals resulting from the reflections are summed up.

• Here is as an example the presentation of the first theme: „Peace is the fruit of justice“.

- Face to face with a situation of injustice, for which the king and nobility are responsible, the prophet preaching before the exile announces that things will change. The Spirit will come and change everything. Under what conditions will this happen? Hope is based on intervention of God through the Spirit in the life of the people and upon their acceptance of the Word. The situation changes because peace is the result of justice (See Isaiah 1,6ff)

- Reading of the text (Isaiah 32,1-8.15-21)

- After having read this text, we need to look at our own situation.

The following questions may help us:

- \* What does the text say about the results of government by an unjust king?
- \* What are the consequences of injustice in our society?
- \* Has the situation of injustice among us changed the priorities of human and moral values?
- \* Is not the violence in our society related to injustice?
- \* If justice is restored, what moral and human values and attitudes are to be regained?

*For further information:* Movimiento Bíblico Católico, Calle 36, No. 64A-10, Medellín, Colombia

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## URUGUAY: The Biblical-Pastoral Ministry

Following the national meeting of the leaders in the biblical ministry, held in October of 1990, the National Commission for the Biblical-Pastoral Ministry in Uruguay presented a report on the biblical-pastoral ministry in the country to the Plenary Assembly of the Episcopal Conference, in April 1991. Here are some excerpts:

„In looking at the experiences of different communities, one observes the effectiveness of the Word of God, in calling together, uniting and forming the community.

The biblical-pastoral ministry encourages the participation of the laity. It strengthens faith, by giving the Word to the people of God, through the liturgy, catechesis and the services of charity. The biblical-pastoral ministry finds its main source in the liturgy, and in particular in the „Table of the Word“ of the mass. At the same time it leads the community to the liturgy.

We think that it is necessary and urgent to make ourselves and others conscious that the entire evangelization for the Church must be founded on Sacred Scripture, the source of all pastoral ministry. The Word of God should inspire and occupy a central place in all of the pastoral ministry, and not just be used to justify certain positions.

It is indispensable to place the Bible in the hands of the people of God, for reading and celebrating it in community in order to challenge, motivate and mobilize, to integral liberation of all who hear it.

The biblical-pastoral ministry, rather than just being about the distribution of a book, should support a personal encounter with God, who speaks to us, and who invites us to form a community of faith.

Actually, in Uruguay, the biblical apostolate does not enjoy priority in the pastoral ministry, nor does it have the place it should occupy, and currently its value is not highly esteemed. Within the pastoral ministry, it is simply one element among others; and through it finds itself present in all sectors, it is not given any special priority. One notes in the communities, a thirst for the Word of God and an interest to get to know and to live it in community.

The mentality that considers the Bible to be a difficult or obscure book, or reserved to specialists or to Protestants is diminishing. A new familiarity with the Word of God is fostered by the Bible group encounters.

Of course there remains a certain difficulty in the use of the Bible, such as its language.

In numerous places of Uruguay, many people gather around the Word of God, in Bible groups. They try to undertake a diligent and systematic reading of the Bible through reflection in community. They use various methods of reading to bring the Word of God to life.

What are the objectives of the biblical-pastoral ministry?

- That the Bible becomes the book of and for the community.
- That the reading of the Word of God be related to life.
- To help the people experience, that they themselves are able to read and meditate the Word of God and discover the Bible as their very own book.
- Make an effort towards placing the Word of God in the heart of the Church and the community, where it rightly belongs.
- Relate daily life to the light of the Word of God. Make the message of the Gospel become incarnate, through a responsible and appropriate reading of the Bible, beyond the different types of readings.

- Support solid biblical formation and knowledge of the Bible in all sectors.
- Help to create the consciousness of the role of the Bible, in answer to the challenges of today, by intensifying the formation of leaders..."

*For further information:* Comisión Nacional de Pastoral Bíblica, Av. Luis A. De Herrera 2231, Montevideo, Uruguay

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## CANADA: Quebec: Declaration of the Bishops of Canada on the Occasion of the 50th Anniversary of SOCABI

„Already 50 years!“ This inspiring title has served as the headline for many different celebrations of the Catholic Biblical Association (Société Catholique de la Bible, SOCABI) in Quebec (see Bulletin No. 18, p. 16).

In 1940, the Catholic Action was in full swing in French speaking Canada. The Catholic Action observes a pedagogy that is primarily action oriented, starting from study circles, leading to inquiry and aiming at revision of life. When they reflect on the facts of life, the activists, both men and women, are invited to recognize correlations between their own situations and those of the Bible.

Therefore, it is quite natural that the leaders of this movement try to place religious books and above all the Bible into the hands of Catholic Action members. It was in 1940, that the Catholic Action founded the Catholic Biblical Association (Société Catholique de la Bible, SOCABI) whose objective it is to distribute the text of the Bible, and to encourage its understanding and actualization. Here, we have the central focus of the „mission“ of SOCABI, what later on will be called the biblical-pastoral ministry. On the one hand, it is the concern of distributing the text and facilitating its personal application based on experience. On the other hand, it is the concern of providing an initiation to the Bible, which takes biblical scholarship into account. SOCABI has always kept a pedagogical concern. Therefore, it is not simply a question of distributing the text, not trying to convert, but to favor a spiritual maturity by allowing the faithful, both men and women, to come back to the source of their faith and to concretely interpret their life in the light of the Word of God. The challenge to be related back to real life has always been the trademark during the cultural crises of Canada like the „quiet revolution“, secularization and the public demand for justice. Here, inculturation and justice are the fundamental axes.

• The Assembly of the Bishops of Quebec has given importance to the anniversary of SOCABI by issuing a declaration on the theme, „Learning to Read the Bible as Church“. Here are some excerpts:

„...in the course of its history, SOCABI has demonstrated a remarkable capacity in adapting to the transformations we have experienced. More than once, the Catholic Biblical Association has marked a new beginning. During the first half of its history, SOCABI has, above all, promoted the distribution of the Bible and the annual celebration of „Bible Sunday“. The last 25 years

have seen a response to the wishes of the Second Vatican Council, which suggested that Sacred Scripture should be easily accessible „through instructions suited to the purpose and other aids which, in our time, are commendably available everywhere, thanks to the approval and active support of the shepherds of the Church“ (Dei Verbum 25). Initiatives have multiplied. Correspondence courses, slides, cassettes, plays, journals, biblical weekends and other initiatives bear ample witness to SOCABI's accomplishments...

SOCABI is a national organization for the biblical-pastoral ministry, recognized by the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Canada. In this function, SOCABI has participated in the foundation of the Catholic Biblical Federation...

The 1990's are marked by a widening of the already very deep chasm between the citizens whose future has been provided for, and those for whom neither the present nor the future holds security. The rift exists not only between the regions of the world, but also between men and women, as well as between recent immigrants and old timers among the residents of Quebec. These gaps create obstacles to the Gospel project and demand from Christians clear options. It is appropriate that SOCABI makes its contribution towards clarifying these options and commitments to the service of justice. The biblical-pastoral ministry should not be estranged from the social-pastoral ministry...

We would like to invite all Christians, all those who have a pastoral responsibility and SOCABI, to dedicate themselves to the subject of the **reading of the Bible**. Even though many things have been written about the Bible, even though many activities aim at introducing the Bible to the world, there are nonetheless many who have not yet arrived at a reading of the Bible. But what does it mean to read the Bible as Church? Under what conditions does this reading produce fruit? These are the questions around which new projects could be launched, a bit everywhere in our Church, with the help of the co-workers of SOCABI.“

• The President of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Quebec also sent a message to the President of SOCABI, in which he affirms especially, „The Bishops are of the opinion that what has been called the biblical-pastoral ministry must be intensified in the heart of the Catholic community... Together with my colleagues in the episcopacy, I wish to encourage the many men and women, who dedicate themselves to the distribution and the interpretation of the Bible, to continue their work of conscientization and animation. Likewise, we understand that our common mission in the Church will not have much chance of success without the constant challenge to maintain a visible and active presence of the Bible in our entire pastoral praxis. We think in the first place of the liturgy, where the Bible already occupies a privileged place, but where we are not satisfied with what has been reached. We likewise think of the total of the pastoral activity, of spiritual assistance, of enlivening our Christian communities, of the different areas of commitment to the family, society and politics.“

*For further information:* SOCABI, 7400 boul. St-Laurent, No.519, Montréal, H2R Y1, Québec, Canada.

## Statement for the Central-Eastern and Eastern European Churches on Partnership in the Biblical Ministry among the (United) Bible Societies and the Catholic Biblical Federation

1. This joint statement comes to you from the United Bible Societies and from the Catholic Biblical Federation: two organizations both committed to the goal of providing easy access to Sacred Scripture for all Christians as well as to adherents of other faiths, in an effort to open the Bible for all.

2. Our organizations have in partnership pursued this goal in many countries for more than 20 years. We rejoice with our fellow-Christians in Central and Eastern Europe about the freedom gained and the new possibilities in their countries, and we would like to offer them our services so that the Word of God in Sacred Scripture becomes a source of hope for all and the centre of the new evangelization.

3. Though the goal of our organizations is the same, the service offered by each is distinct. But since they complement each other, our relationship is one of partnership rather than competition. The services of one does not make those of the other superfluous. Involvement with one does not preclude involvement with the other. In all brevity we are describing here the distinctive character of our organizations and services.

4. God's Word reaches us in a privileged way through the sacred writings which we call the Bible, a book of a time and culture different from our own, which is read and comes alive in the context of communities bound together by the same faith. In order that God's Word may reach people of today through the Scriptures, the Bible must be made available first of all as a book - through translation, production and distribution. Then the Scriptures must be properly used and interpreted within the ministry of the Church in order to be rightly understood and lived by.

5. The first concern - the translation, production and distribution of the Bible - is the main activity of the United Bible Societies and their member Bible Societies in different countries. They do this as a fellowship of Christians of various Churches and confessions. The Bible Societies are committed to inter-confessional collaboration and to the service of all the Churches, providing them the Scriptures in the form and canon that the Churches require. Since the II Vatican Council opened the possibility for Catholics of such interconfessional collaboration, they have increasingly done so.

6. The second concern, to make the written and inspired Word come alive within the ministry of the Church, is generally and traditionally considered to be the task of the Churches, i.e., this task is of a confessional nature, and it is this task that the Catholic Biblical Federation promotes through its member organizations. The task comprises instruction about the proper use of the Bible as understood by the Church, the production of annotated Bibles and Bible-related literature, etc.

7. Because of the distinctive, yet equally necessary and complementary nature of their services, it is desirable that in each country or area of a Bishops' Conference, a local Bible Society and - for Catholics - a Biblical-Pastoral Commission/Organization/Institution be set up (or at least a contact person be named). Due to the interconfessional nature of the aims of the Bible Society, it would be useful that Catholics be actively involved also in the work and mission of their local Bible Society.

8. For Catholics - especially Bishops' Conferences and Bishops, as well as organizations and individuals interested and involved in the biblical-pastoral ministry - assistance, advice and resources are available through the Subregional Coordinator for Central and Eastern Europe of the Catholic Biblical Federation, or through the Federation's Secretariat, at the following addresses:

The Subregional Coordinator  
for Central and Eastern Europe  
Stiftsplatz 8  
Postfach 48  
A-3400 Klostemeuburg

The General Secretary  
Catholic Biblical Federation  
Mittelstr. 12  
Postfach 10 52 22  
D-7000 Stuttgart 10

9. For leaders of all Churches and confessions, and for other interested in participating in interconfessional Bible work, information, advice and assistance are available from:

The Regional Secretary  
United Bible Societies  
European Middle East Regional Centre  
3 Gleneagles Court, Brighton Rd.  
Crawley, RH10 6AD  
England

Signed in June 1991:

Rev. Dr. John D. Erickson  
General Secretary  
United Bible Societies

Fr. Dr. Ludger Feldkämper, SVD  
General Secretary  
Catholic Biblical Federation

Most Rev. Bishop Alberto Ablondi  
President of the Catholic Biblical Federation  
Vice President of the United Bible Societies