

Catholic Biblical Federation

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Bulletin

*Verbum
Dei*

THE BIBLE AND THE MEDIA

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 these 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).

KATHOLISCHE BIBELFÖDERATION

General Secretariat
Postfach 10 52 22
D-70045 Stuttgart
Germany

Tel.: (0711) 169 24-0
Fax: (0711) 1692424

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Editors:

Ludger Feldkämper, Pilar de Miguel

Production and Layout

Hildegard Rathgeb

Translators:

Jaime Asenjo, Emmanuel Billoteau,
Robin Duckworth, Gerhard Lesch,
Pilar de Miguel, Mercedes Navarro,
Elisabeth Peeters,

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Editorial

The Bulletin is ten years old. We decided to celebrate the fact by presenting our readers with an index of the contents of *Dei Verbum* throughout the whole of this time. We recall that the Spanish edition began with the monograph devoted to the Plenary Assembly in Bogotá (Nos. 15/16).

The next number (40/41) will also be a double one, and its sole object will be to give information about the Plenary Assembly in Hong Kong. As you know, this will be held from the 2nd to the 12th of July.

While reflecting on the past ten years of the Bulletin, one cannot avoid thinking about the next ten. Will it continue to be on paper or will it be transferred to the waves that travel through an invisible cable? Cybernetics and the wider spectrum of circumstances that surround it are making us consider a qualitative change in human relations and communications.

All this seemed fantastic to me until I received a letter from Pakistan recounting an experience of biblical pastoral ministry among those who cannot read (evidently, the majority are women). This testimony fascinated me for many reasons and led my reflection in the following direction: which peoples and nations will remain isolated by these new super highways? How will humanity confront this new complexity of co-existence between the privileged and the underprivileged as a result of the Gutenberg effect (already going on for some centuries) and the new cyber-illiterate and -literate?

How will cyber-exegesis and cyber-biblical pastoral ministry co-exist with oral tradition, the written and the non-written? The Catholic Biblical Federation has to think about these questions, and initiate debate, reflection, alternatives, communication between the different members; those who circulate via the super highways and those who muddy themselves on un-asphalted roads. This is the reason for the range of topics in this number.

There comes to mind a notice that appeared in the media, which many of you possibly remember. A well known world chess champion proclaimed very proudly (I don't know whether it was he or his agent) that he had beaten "the machine", after an "historic" match with a computer. Somewhat puzzled and naively I wondered whether he had realised that he had only beaten another human mind which had written the programme. So we should keep things in perspective. True? Will we do so?

Pilar de Miguel

THE BIBLE AND THE MEDIA

*From the 18th to the 22nd of April, 1995, a meeting took place in Rome on the subject: **The Bible and the Media**. It was organised by The Latin American Association of Social Communication, the interdisciplinary Centre of Social Communication of the Gregorian Pontifical University and the Institute of the Sciences of Social Communication of the Salesian Pontifical University.*

Since the theme is of vital importance for the CBF, we are reproducing the reflections and practical experiences offered on the theme by the speakers: Heinrich Kraus, Nazareno Marconi and Marco Frisina. The object is to stimulate reflection and discussion on this matter.

Preliminary Notes

Below is a list of questions to help to discover the multiple allusions and hidden information in a biblical text.

Evidently the questions in the list are not all relevant to every passage. Nevertheless, they do fit the greater part to the narratives of the Old Testament (with the exception, perhaps, of biblical prehistory).

It is necessary to take into account the fact that the biblical writings (for the most part) are made up of small, individual narrative units (pericopes), which, on the other hand, are connected to large, complex narratives.

For this reason the questions are divided into two separate lists which demonstrate, one way or another, their various perspectives.

I speak of an *individual narrative or pericope* when a story is presented more or less independently, which can be recounted completely and within a single context, for example: the sacrifice of Isaac, Jacob's struggle with the angel or Moses at the burning bush.

Often one recognises in this story a beginning and an end by the fact that

there are mutual indications with regard to the state of events or the time frame.

The analysis of more extensive narratives highlights additional questions whose answers often show perspectives that can contribute to the understanding of the message of each pericope.

By *complex narrative* is understood a succession of linked narratives which are connected by means of a common theme and/or chain of inter related events. With some stories this is evident as, for example, the series of narratives about Abraham, the story of the exodus from Egypt, or the election and rejection of Saul.

In other cases the complex narrative is not evident as a whole, or there are various possibilities for constructing a narrative arch, as in the case of so many stories about David. Already the search for a beginning and an end of the complex narrative gives rise to unexpected ideas about the complexity of the plot.

Questions concerning an individual narrative unit (pericope)

Construction and narrative form of the text

- How are the *entries* formed and the *exits* employed respectively at the beginning and end of the narrative unit?

- What sub sections are recognisable? Which is the exposition, the climax, the solution? Is there any moment of delay?

- What form do the sub sections take: objective, summary, dramatic scene, retrospection, description, commentary?

- At what point does the narrative proceed slowly, at what point quickly?

- How is the suspense constructed?

- Where is the point of the story?

- Where do repetitions occur? Are they truly identical?

- Are there contradictions in the make-up of the drama? Or with other narrative units?

- What atmosphere dominates the pericope or each of its narrative elements: surprise, idyll (romance), humour, irony?

Plausibility

- In what measure is the drama plausible? Where is the internal truth to be found of a legend or a miraculous story?

- What religious/human experience does the text wish to transmit? Does this correspond to the experience of life today?

- Is there anything in the drama or the message which is strange as regards mentality or conditions of life?

- Is there anything in the story that touches me personally, in a positive or a negative way?

- Do there exist in the world today situations parallel to those recounted in the Bible? Would it be possible, or sensible, to transpose the story into the world of today?

Questions concerning the more extensive, complex narrative

Sub divisions of the context

- Where are the beginning and the ending recognisable in the chain of events?

- Is there any prophecy that comes to fulfilment?

- Is the main theme recognisable?

- Which narrative units appear indispensable for the unfolding of the drama? Which, on the contrary, are less important?

- Are there different narrative lines? How are they integrated into the overall development?

- How are the points of union between the narrative units achieved in the text?

- What personages/groups appear throughout, and, which, on the other hand, appear only in some individual narratives?

- When and where are new protagonists introduced?

- Has each of the protagonists a recurring pattern?

- What are the consequences?

- Where and how have the protagonists been able to comport themselves differently?

- What personages or places also develop a role in other complex narratives in the Bible?

- Can one perceive in the mode of presentation and/or commentaries a theological or political orientation?

- Are statements concerning the works of God different in other parts of the Old Testament or the New testament?

Problems of adapting for cinema

- Up to what point can I, should I, is it allowed for me to accept (modify) the objective of the message and orientation of the text?

- In the case of contradictions between pericopes is it better to harmonise them, abandon them or give them importance?

The protagonists in the action

- What persons/groups/men/women appear? Are they called by name? Does the etymological significance of the name help the understanding of the story?

- Are there indications concerning the aspect, origin, position and such like things? What has been said or expressed in another way concerning its character?

- What are the positive or negative relations between the personages who are involved according to their family, social, political, etc. situations?

- Is there some name that refers to preceding or successive events that has to do with the present story/drama?

The places of the action

- What indications are to be found as regards places or journeys?

- Is there any place name that refers to preceding or successive events which have to do with the present story/drama?

- What associations are bound up with certain indications of place, such as names of springs, mountains or villages?

The time of the action

- What references are there regarding time or season? Do the temporal indications offer information concerning the duration of the action?

- Does the mentions of feasts give any information for understanding the drama?

Objects and conditions of life

- What utensils, arms and suchlike appear? Is anything said in more detail in this respect?

- What laws and customs develop a role?

- What is expressed by certain gestures?

The situation of the account

- What comes before? What comes after?

- What is the special feature and the ranges of topics in the biblical book in question?

- Is the message of the pericope changed or completed by being joined to the context?

The role of God

- How does God influence the events?

- Does the biblical author refer in an objective way to divine intervention and its motivation, or comment on it? What does he make the personages say?

- Is God involved? How does he respond - directly, or through events?

Questions about films on Jesus: 5 aspects to take in account

Dr. Heinrich Krauss

A. Contents

Which of the episodes based on the gospels was decided on? Did you restrict yourself to one gospel or did you combine material from several gospels?

Did you add episodes not found in the gospels? How effective have modern literary works (Jesus-novels and the like) become?

Is there a background story?

B. Consideration of modern exegesis

Did you stress the literary characteristic of the gospels as "evidence for faith" or

did you arouse rather the impression of a historical report?

Did you take into consideration the different kinds of "historicity" in the individual excerpts of Jesus' life (childhood, public life, resurrection)?

How did you treat the accounts of supernatural happenings (like miracles or the appearances of angels)?

Were Jesus' sayings - especially the parables - built into a narrative context?

C. Dealing with the "Historical Trench"

Is the plot set in the past or transposed into the contemporary environment?

Did you reproduce buildings, costumes, rites and customs with historical precision, or were you content with an approximation?

How much did you shoot in the studio and how much did you use the countryside and places still in keeping with the New Testament environment?

Did you succeed in making intelligible the concerns and conflicts of the biblical era?

Were biblical texts used literally? How much was the biblical language modernised in the dialogues? Were you satisfied with clichés (like tax-collector, Pharisee, sinner)?

D. Religious content

Is a religious effect expected? Can the film only address believers, or can it reach a wider public?

Did you remain within the parameters of a religious, Christian interpretation of the Bible, or did you create new emphases of a social, political or psychological nature?

How far is it possible to establish differences in taste that are specific to national, confessional or a particular social stratum?

How did you deal with the danger of anti-Semitic tendencies, which can easily slip in when filming the life of Jesus? Did you try to make clear the position of Jesus within the Judaism of his day?

E. Cinematic aspects

Has the film artistic qualities?

How important are the visual/display effects in the decorations costumes, or crowd scenes?

Did you let yourself be guided by reminiscences from Christian art?

Choice of characters: known or unknown actors?

Is the role of Jesus convincing? What was more emphasised, his divine or his human nature?

using bookstalls as channels of communication as well as the traditional book shops, at an extremely interesting price that will be within the means of every family (29,900 lire).

The translation of the Bible, on paper, published in co-editorship with LDC, is the fruit of years of work and of the long experience that the United Bible Societies (ABU) has acquired translating the Bible into the principal languages of the world.

It differs from others because it seeks to translate the Hebrew and Greek text in words and forms from everyday Italian, that customary and familiar language that people use among themselves - *current, or everyday, language*. Protestants and Catholics have worked together on this translation and together they present it to the readers.

It is an *interconfessional* translation, accepted by all Christian persuasions and offered to every person, in the common conviction that the Bible "can teach the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith in Christ Jesus" (2 Timothy 3:15).

The entire text of the Bible has found, from today, a new support, not just paper, but one that is versatile and handy and which allows both the lay public and the specialist to "navigate" between the various levels of content by presenting innovative perspectives for consulting Sacred Scripture.

The electronic version of the Bible is not meant to replace the traditional printed editions, since, in some cases, a book is more practical than a computer.

Rather it is a useful complement for those who need to locate quickly and with precision necessary information which otherwise could only be found with difficulty.

This instrument of information, which has now become an indispensable companion in our offices or our homes, helps us to organise, to save time, to put in order and to print.

This use of a machine combines well, therefore, with those who want to approach Sacred Scripture for a variety of reasons. Often we do so out of curiosity, or to prepare a dissertation or thesis, or

THE INTERACTIVE BIBLE

Interconfessional translation in everyday language

Luisa Marangoni's reflection for Parole di Vita 5/1995 complements or augments the range of reflection on the Media.

Finally on the market, the awaited programme for the Personal Computer with MS-windows, "The Interactive Bible - ITEL Version" on seven floppy disks, a most useful interactive instrument for consultation and study of the Word of God, produced by LDC-ABU in co-editorship with Garamond of Rome, already well-known in the field of electronic publication.

The fascination of the new technology of computer science, above all upon the young, is now put at the service of knowledge of Sacred Scripture, combining the great merits of the tradition of our religious history with the more recently developed instruments of communication.

This editorial initiative, therefore, intends to address as wide a public as possible

for some other reason: "How many times does the word 'woman' occur in the Bible? Or the word 'father'? In which books? In which contexts?"

Or else, "We do not remember which verse speaks of 'camel ... of the eye of a needle...'. Well, with *THE INTERACTIVE BIBLE* there is a quick, and above all, an easy answer to such questions. And more besides.

Interactivity is guaranteed to users who, by storing what they want, can personalise the text with their own annotations, or select and keep a particularly interesting phrase (as one might do on paper), or link one word with another or with an image.

In short, *GARAMOND* has taken account of the "current" and "anticipated" re-

quirements of users dealing with the text, words and their context.

In particular, the programme allows one, among other functions, to search out a single word or a number of words together, as well as entire phrases or roots of terms using advanced functions; it will indicate occurrences and display the contexts in which these appear; it will copy text into other programmes; it will print immediately selected parts or verses containing the terms being sought.

One can introduce personal notes which remain stored alongside the individual verses.

One can make connections between words in the text which are widely separated; one can insert sounds and images.

One can personalise the text with book-marks and also highlight portions of text

or individual words, thus managing the map of one's own reading course. And more besides.

The young and not so young, students, scholars, catechists, teachers, parish priests, researchers and many others now have on their own personal computers not only programmes for word processing, games, encyclopaedias, but also an amazing instrument for approaching Sacred Scripture.

Requirements for the *MS WINDOWS VERSION*:

- IBM compatible computer 386 or higher;
- at least 4Mb RAM
- a hard disk with at least 8Mb free
- a 31/2" disk drive (high density)
- MS-DOS 3.1 or higher
- WINDOWS 3.1
- an Italian manual.


5TH PLENARY ASSEMBLY
OF THE CBF
2nd - 12th July
Hong Kong


GERICO di Del Vaglio



FOR REFLECTION

Criteria for a televised production of the Bible

For the person of today reading and understanding the Bible is not always easy.

This project of a televised production of the Old Testament came about in order to facilitate the knowledge of the fundamental text of divine revelation and human culture. "Lux Finanziaria per Iniziative Audiovisive e Telematiche" and "Beta Taurus" intend to televise it through RAI, the European and world networks and through all the multimedia means. (Nazzeno Marconi y Marco Fusina)

Why "the Bible" on TV?

The Bible is the revelation of God and humankind, a double disclosure: that of God who loves humankind who seek him, whom he guides, and that of human beings who live continually trying to understand their own existence, the sense of sorrow and of joy, always anxious to understand the why of their own life and its final end.

God reveals himself as the One who accomplishes with human beings a way of living their own history, made up of contradictions and sin, with the love of a Father who sustains, but who also knows how to correct, who loves, but also knows how to punish. God involves himself with human beings and not simply to say "good words" to them; on the contrary he involves himself in their history and lives their life.

The Bible describes all that but not in an abstract and purely intellectual way. In narrating events and personages it reveals the heart of humans and the heart of God. The great personages of the Bible are in fact only two: God and the human being.

In the events narrated in the biblical books God and humans seek one another and lose one another, they find one another

and leave one another, in a turmoil of events and of reality that are "history" in a very particular way.

It is not a chronicle, as we conceive history today, made up of dates, proven events, of incontestable documents, of archaeological proofs and checks.

The history of the Bible is something higher and truer; it is the history of human life and of the events that mark it, history made by the powerful and the poor, made by famous personages and those unknown.

The Bible is not interested in the day, the month or the year, nor is it interested in things and events as such; the question the Bible asks is not "when?" or "who?", but "why?", "what does it mean?"

After the failure of many ideologies and so many myths, the actuality of the Old Testament appears even more incisive: the personages and the events of the biblical account and their questions and answers are still actual and illuminating today.

The human being of today, like those of centuries ago, is moved by the same passions and seeks the same things, above all he or she seeks a sense of life that only God can disclose.

For the person of today reading and understanding the Bible is not always easy.

This project of a televised production of the Old Testament came about in order to facilitate the knowledge of the fundamental text of divine revelation and human culture. "Lux Finanziaria per Iniziative Audiovisive e Telematiche" and "Beta Taurus" intend to televise it through RAI, the European and world networks and through all the multimedia means.

Methods of approaching the screenplay

The Old Testament is not a text "for initiates", but a popular text that gathers together documents from different epochs and situations. It is a kind of "historical memory" of humanity often re-read and re-visited. Men and women have made it their own in different epochs, interpreting it through their own experience, and throwing new light on the text.

The Old Testament is the account of the experience that men and women have of God, a story of real life and not just theory. Some accounts could frustrate a reader who today might wish to find there goodness knows what literary suggestions.

But the one who approaches them without prejudice can find his or her own existence narrated, his or her own problems and aspirations.

For these reasons biblical experts, script writers, producers, have worked, are working and will work on this televisual production of the Old Testament. They will avoid making an over-literal and simplistic production of the text.

Their aim is to produce an attentive and faithful interpretation, recounting it in a fascinating televisual story which will appeal to men and women and, above all, young people who, at the close of the second millennium follow televised transmissions and look at video-cassettes and video-disks.

To this end experts, script writers and producers are resorting to interpretative techniques which have been utilised for

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(Cont. from pg. 8)
centuries, to biblical exegesis and to the history of literature and poetry, as well as to the techniques of televisual drama writing.

In practice, in the delicate phase of the preparation of the various televised episodes of the Bible, the following processes are employed:

1) First of all at "technical" reading of the text, which consists of a scientific base, founded on the Jewish and Christian Confessions, and which likewise constitutes a fundamental criterion for every successive interpretation and invention.

A most rigorous archaeological and historical research aims at establishing a sure frame in which to be able to produce a narrative without fear of betraying the original meaning of the text and, at the same time, to have a solid base for possible narrative inventions.

2) A theological and philosophical analysis will be made so as not to betray the biblical thought and to make it as effective as possible.

A comparison between the various passages of the biblical text, which often comment on preceding passages, will illuminate the understanding of the sense that the sacred authors wanted to give to a specific episode.

3) A literary analysis and a dramatic transposition will be carried out, whether of biblical events or personages, in a way that will weave a plot which presents, even to non believers, the coherence and depth of the concept of life expressed by the Bible.

4) A careful research will be made into extra-biblical literature, for all that can help in the interpretation of the text and of the events narrated, so as to give vividness, and to place the biblical account into real "existence", thus bringing out the universal characteristics of the biblical personages.

In order to transpose the biblical story into effective images experts and script writers have recourse to ancient narrative methods used by the Hebrew rabbis (namely, haggadah and midrash) so as to be able to explain and, at the same time, recount the biblical events.

Methods that can unite instruction and theology, history and literature, poetry and chronicle. In this way everything that could appear to be heavy and tedious historical and archaeological apparatus, however necessary it may be for giving scientific rigour to the televisual production, is inserted into the account in an easy and attractive way.

Just like the ancient rabbis who had to attract and instruct, fascinating the listener with their "legends" that filled in the narrative gaps of the Bible. In this way they explained what the text was saying implicitly, making use of events which, while not being recounted materially in Scripture, could explain it.

With these devices the televisual account seeks to incorporate in a dramatic way the notes and introductions, which normally are necessary for the understanding of the text, without inventing or adding things that could betray or misrepresent the biblical meaning.

Specific problems of televisual screenplays

There are many problems that arise in a transposition of the biblical text for television. For example:

a) Supernatural events

In the oral and written tradition of the Old Testament God speaks, commands, converses with human beings. As well as that he acts through prodigies and signs, at times in a striking way. This close relation with human events must be brought out effectively in the televisual account, but also in a way that is not fabulous and "mythical".

It is clear that biblical language uses images and ways of recounting the supernatural that, if transferred literally into television, would result in improbabilities and would, in some instances, reduce the audience to laughter.

In a culture like that of the Bible, in which there were no philosophical and abstract categories, the description of what transcended human beings had, perforce, to be portrayed through spectacular events, which could, with their symbols and meaning, describe and explain the action of God.

The efforts of the script writers and the producers will be to make these symbols of God's action clear, by refraining from trivial and miracle-like effects by underlining the mystery bound to the action of God in the history of humankind; by simplifying the "theophanic" imagery, that is, the revelation of the supernatural, so as not to make the biblical account into a science fiction kind of account.

On the contrary they will seek constantly not to trivialise these events but to render them charged with emotion and interior tension, thus giving meaning to the human being's experience of God.

b) God who speaks

When God speaks he does so in different ways. Scripture itself distinguishes these. Often the Bible says: "God said..."; at other times God speaks directly to the people: "God said to Israel ... to Abraham...". At yet other times God speaks in a vision or through the mouth of an angel.

From time to time they will seek to represent the "speaking" of God; sometimes through the words of the personages themselves who become the means of the revelation itself of God, at other times, above all, when it is a question of important revelation, through visions which are inserted in a natural way into the daily life of the personages; these represent an in-breaking of God into everyday life; at other times in a way whereby the events themselves "speak" demonstrating the will of God.

The televisual account will try to show how God reveals himself to humankind in an objective, and not a "fantastic", way. It will also try to show the diversity of these revelations, the different symbols through which the will of God is revealed, and which make it possible to portray the character of God in a more complete way.

Sometimes God has the face of a man, sometimes of a child; at the Creation it is a beating of wings, a breath of life; at other times it is the face of an old man or the face of a woman. It is the Bible which, from time to time, will suggest which face to give to Him who has no face, but who reveals himself in the history of humankind.

c) The apparent discontinuity and repetitiveness of the events

In the Old Testament many events are recounted in a discontinuous way. They will try to get around this difficulty by reading the various stories as a coherent narrative which portrays them as a continuity or as a development from one to another.

Above all, in the first Section, in which the historical settings follow one another quickly, they will try to show clearly to the viewer the historical continuity of the account, and also if there are notable jumps in time.

In the Bible this problem is resolved by means of "genealogies". Such "genealogies" in the televisual account will be

transformed into narrative links which will form a bridge between the events narrated.

They will try to simplify repetitions, and when there are redundant events, these will be unified into a single narration, respecting the general sense. The repetitions derive, in fact, from different traditions preserved (no problem with doublets) by the ancient editors of the Bible.

d) The age of the personages and the historical inconsistencies

The ages of the personages, whose exaggerated numbers hide a particular symbolism of existence and of God's blessing, will be reduced to historical probability. In this way they will try to give a coherent historical background to the events.

always the fruits of the experience with the Parkari Kolhis, my home group, if you like.

When trying to share the Bible in its fullness with our community, there are two basic problems: language and literacy. The Parkari language has only become a written language in the last ten years.

In this short space of time, tremendous leaps have been made in the production of the written Word: a translation from the German *Katholische Schulbibel*, a very extensive hymn book containing the psalms and much other scriptural material; and at present in its last stages, the complete New Testament (co-sponsored by the CBF and the Protestant Bible Society I believe).

As this indicates, it has been felt essential to have the Word available in the vernacular. When there are literate people available, this becomes a powerful proclamation: the problem remains, *WHEN*.

The literacy rate among our Parkari community would be probably less than 10 %, and all literate people can not necessarily read their own language because schools are in one of two mediums: Urdu and Sindhi. These languages each have their own script. Parkari has been devised from the Sindhi script.

Therefore, those literate in Urdu, have to learn the Script before receiving the Word in their mother tongue. If this sounds complicated, it is! The Churches are making attempts in literacy programmes, but the impact is limited because of the dispersed form of life, and the lack of teachers.

I should point out that those who attend and struggle with literacy attainment are very frequently motivated by a desire to read the scriptures. In our own parish, many of our liturgical readers are women who have followed parish literacy programmes (it is much harder to get men to attend literacy classes).

While these efforts continue, my own area of concern has been to open the Word to people who are non literate, and who often do not have a literate person in their midst to read for them.

LIFE OF THE FEDERATION

Experiences

Letter from Sindh/Pakistan

Mrs Alice Keenleyside tells us something about her activity and that of the Joti Centre in Pakistan. It is an experience full of creativity, as are the materials to which she alludes and which we have received with pleasure at the general Secretariat.

Pakistan at present has the distinction of the second lowest literacy rate in the world, it also has a plethora of languages spoken within its boundaries, many of which are not yet in any written form.

In the diocese of Hyderabad, the Catholic population consists basically of three language and cultural groups: Punjabi (both rural and urban, but predominantly urban), Kutchi Kolhi (a rural caste in the process of primary evangelisation) and

Parkari Kolhi (a larger rural caste with some members being already third generation Christian, and with primary evangelisation carrying on at the same time as the catechism of the baptised community).

I work particularly among this latter group, but because I am involved at both parish and diocesan level, my work extends into the other two groups. The work I engage in with the latter is almost

The first breakthrough was achieved with Bangalore in India giving us permission to reproduce a series of 144 posters of the Bible stories in book form. This has, in our community, become the Word in almost everyone's house.

It is perhaps hard for people in the West to appreciate the importance of the Holy Book in our country. To be a person of "the Book" carries a sense of dignity, and to be able to 'read' that Book - this gains one the respect of any of the religious communities. I would like to dwell on the impact that this *Picture Bible* has had.

The book itself, the work of Sister Maria Beatrix Schlepffhorst, f.c., is a beautiful object, coloured red, and with beautiful reproduced pictures accompanied by the picture titles in Sindhi, Urdu and Parkari, together with the Scripture references in case of a literate family member.

In Pakistan, it is customary to wrap a Holy book in a specially made cover, often beautifully embroidered.

In our parish, we have ensured that every Christian family has a Bible - either the picture Bible, or the written Word if a person is literate, in whichever of the languages he or she is literate.

In the great majority of our families, the copy of the Bible they have is the Picture Bible.

All of our catechumens receive a copy of the Bible, according to the *RCIA* rites. At marriage, the Christian partner (marriages are often between Christians and Hindus in the Parkari world, because of consanguinity laws of the caste) receives a bible as part of the preparation for the rites.

The catechists use the Picture Bible in their teaching, although in the beginning this was not easy, as literate people find it very hard to accommodate the use of such a form of the Word.

Several years ago, in celebration of Bible Sunday, we began the week with a competition among the women for Bible covers.

On Bible Sunday, they brought their covered Bibles to the parish Eucharist and there was a blessing of family Bibles.

In the following week we went from house to house for a formal enthronement and house blessing.

The response was overwhelming. Each house had prepared a shelf or table, which was beautifully decorated, and waiting for our arrival. The Bible, in whichever form, was solemnly enthroned, and the family dedicated to the Light of the World.

I would like to share one event from this week to illustrate the power people recognise in the Word present among them.

We live in a world in which the powers of darkness are very much a part of the conscious life of our community. People fear evil spirits deeply, and, as in the gospel world understand sickness and misfortune in terms of personal sin and the forces of evil.

There was one house in our largest village in which the members, although baptised, had not yet come to a stage of really opting either for Christ or their previous religious commitment.

The grandmother had remained Hindu and exerted a strong influence over the whole family, except one boy who was studying in our parish school.

In the time preceding Bible Sunday, I had been asked twice to go and pray for the youngest child who was very ill, and despite treatment was not improving.

On the appointed day, one of the catechists and I were going from house to house for the enthronement rite. Neither of us really expected to be invited into this house. Surprisingly, we were, and found that everything had been prepared. We prayed for the family, and especially the sick child.

A few days later, the mother of the house came and asked me to arrange for a thanksgiving Mass in the house.

This was the first time that we had received such an invitation from them for a long time. We went, and it is customary to eat with the family before the celebration of the Eucharist.

I was sitting with the women and the mother began to tell me how their house

had been regularly visited by an evil spirit for several weeks.

All members of the family had experienced this, and the small child had remained sick from the advent of the appearances.

She admitted that her husband's mother had performed various non-Christian rites to appease the spirit, but there had been no relief.

She then told me that the family reluctantly agreed to the son's request to take part in the Bible enthronement programme. They had been very nervous of this, and the old lady was not at all happy.

After the enthronement of the Bible, the spirit had disappeared, and the sick child made a rapid recovery. We celebrated the Eucharist in that house with a gospel account of Jesus power to cast out spirits.

This incident can be read as bowing to the superstitious beliefs of people, or it can be understood through their eyes. The Bible is understood by people to be the symbolic presence of Jesus, the Word.

This family had learnt in the Catechumenate that Jesus has the power to cast out evil spirits, but being told and experiencing are two different things.

The family were under pressure not to allow the Bible to be enthroned in their house. The traditional gods are never allowed in the house, they are too fearsome, and are accommodated outside the hut.

The decision to allow Christ a permanent residence inside the house was a very difficult one: a jump into faith.

The return to health of the child was for this family an indication of the not simply non-malignant, but loving and healing presence of Christ in their lives, and they responded by asking for the celebration of a thanksgiving Mass.

Most experts, when discussing popular devotion, stress that one of the tests of efficacy and orthodoxy is whether the practice (and understanding) of the cultic practice deepens the persons relation with God and leads them into rather than away

from the cultic practice of the mainstream, particularly the Eucharist.

This event served to identify for these people an understanding of the Word as Christ, the Word as Bible, not the worship of paper, but of the real presence of Christ.

A few more examples of this picture Bible, which has brought the Word into the lives of our non literate community.

As mentioned already, the Parkari Kolhis are from a Hindu background, and their daily cultic practice is slowly evolving, on their own initiative, into a Christian cultus, with the Bible playing a very central role as a physical symbol of the presence of Christ, the Word.

At weddings, there are many cultic practices for the protection of the girl and boy as they enter into the state of liminality preparatory to this most important rite of passage.

To protect and bless the individual and all connected with the rites, a clay image of the god Gunesh, the elephant God, is made.

He is, with due ceremony installed in the room where the girl or boy sits for the period prior to marriage (up to two weeks). Shortly after the introduction of the picture Bible in our parish, I was attending the preliminary marriage rites of a girl.

Neighbouring women gathered to take part, and the group was made up of Christians, Hindus and Muslims.

The mother of the girl, who is the cultic officiator, brought out all the items to be used during the ceremonies of the following days.

As she laid them down, there was surprise at the absence of Gunesh, and she was immediately questioned. Her explanation was that Jesus is the Word of God.

The Word of God is present among us in the form of the Bible. Jesus is our saviour and protector, the blesser of our actions, and more powerful than any evil spirit.

Therefore, she didn't feel the need for Gunesh, instead, she was installing the

Bible in his place - the sign of Jesus presence in the house, and not a lump of clay that would be thrown away afterwards, but that would stay with the girl after she was married.

The response of the Muslim neighbours in particular was very interesting. They commented that after four hundred years of leaving Hinduism for Islam, they had not yet had the courage to leave Gunesh out of their ceremonies. This woman is a first generation Christian.

In a similar way, women have begun to make decisions about other practices, which they no longer feel they need, because in the Bible, they have Christ present.

They can 'read' the pictures, and they are developing a cultus which has avoided what has happened among some other groups in the sub-continent: either a secret dual cultus, of which people are ashamed and fearful, or an awful vacuum, which is almost impossible to cope with in our environment steeped in magic and fear of the supernatural.

Women and the Bible: The banner method

This technique was originally developed to produce re-useable large visual aids to accompany the readings for the vigil Mass of Holy Saturday night. This is our big night of the year in the parish.

People come from their villages to celebrate together the feast of the Resurrection and the initiation of new members into the Community.

Using slides can be effective, but we wanted to be able to build up the Salvation story stage by stage, and then use the visuals for the sermon.

Cloth is readily available in Pakistan, including second hand material, and scraps can be collected from the numerous tailors to be found in every bazaar. Most women are able to hand sew, in our area, appliqué and patchwork are familiar techniques.

The original set of banners (4' x 9') was made to accompany the Genesis, Abraham, Exodus, Romans readings and the Gospel.

I did the designing and sewing myself for this set (photos enclosed, plus a black and white line drawing of the banner used for the Romans text, which reminds the congregation of Jesus' Way of the Cross, for those who are unable to attend the Triduum because of distance and step by step instructions for a non literate group using the Abraham banner as an example).

The banners were successful in their original intention, and also proved easy to transport for catechetical purposes to various parts of the parish.

These original banners have now been used and well travelled for five years, without showing any wear.

Gradually other parishes began showing an interest, and so it was decided to run a series of training workshops for groups of women from the various parishes in the Diocese. This provided a way of fulfilling several aims:

- to involve women in the liturgical life of the Church as contributors
- to develop a Bible learning experience for non literate women
- to empower these women to become Bible teachers themselves

The response from the parishes was encouraging, in that talent has been recognised, and these women are now contributing to the liturgical celebrations and catechises of their parishes.

The workshops are designed in the following way:

1. Teams of four women come from different parishes to a central location for four or five days. (For most women, this is the first time in their lives that they have time for themselves, so the atmosphere is very joyful.)
2. The intention is that each group will produce a completed banner to take back with them to their parishes.

This is very important, both for their own sense of achievement, and so that they have something to show of their skills on their return. This encourages the parish to carry on with follow-up projects.

3. A sample banner is displayed, and the story told. The groups share their reflections on the story and then retell it to the larger group using the banner. The enclosed pictures will show that each banner presents a Bible story in stages.

4. The banner is then examined in terms of production technique: What kind of fabrics have been used. How the pieces have been sewn. The use of colour to identify characters as they progress through the story.

5. Members of the group are now asked to tell the story again, using the colour symbols etc. to identify characters, topology, mood and so on.

6. Each group is given a set of paper patterns for a particular banner, together with prepared packs of fabric and a line drawing of the design. (This is done, to save time as the course is very labour intensive, requiring every minute of the time to complete a banner.)

We have found that using buckram as backing for individual figures produces a much more professional first effort, making the cutting and sewing much neater.

7. As work begins, ideally, one team member sits with each group, going over

the story, and guiding the cutting and sewing techniques.

8. During the workshop, morning and evening prayer in the (various) vernaculars, provide a frame for the day, with other banners and their stories being introduced in this context.

We have a wealth of hymns relating to the various banners, which, if not known to all, are taught by those who know them.

9. On the last day each group presents its banner and tells the appropriate Bible story through the banner. For most women, this is the first time they will have ever presented a Bible story to others, and it has a powerful effect.

10. On return to their parishes, the women are encouraged not only to continue producing banners, but to start groups involving others, teaching them both Bible and production techniques.

This works best when a member of the pastoral team attends the workshop in person, as part of their parish group. On their return, they are then able to follow up and encourage the women, and if necessary, act as or recruit readers to help the group explore new Bible stories.

and separate initiatives are in hand to promote *lectio divina* in the area.

More information from: B. P. 7245 Kinshasa.

America

Peru

On September 30th, 1995 a Bible Day took place on the theme: "*Jesus teaches us to read the Bible*". In order to orientate catechists the Episcopal Commission for Catechesis and Biblical Pastoral Ministry produced a very interesting pamphlet in which, among other things, it recalled the seven *small keys* for reading the Bible:

1. feet on the ground;
2. ability to see;
3. ability to listen;
4. ability to speak;
5. possess a good heart;
7. have a good head, and
7. kneel down.

Asia

Macao

The Union of Chinese Catholic Biblical Associations (UCCBA) held the fourth Chinese Biblical Meeting from 30th September to 5th October, 1995.

More than 50 Chinese speaking pastoral workers took part in the meeting, coming from Australia, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Macao, Eastern Malaysia, Mauritius Taiwan and the EEUU.

The participants formulated the following closing Declaration, committing themselves to:

1. Study and familiarise ourselves with the Word of God to as to sanctify our lives.
2. Listen to the Word contained in the Book, but also to listen to the message of God through social events, in particular through the weak, the poor and the young.

News

The Bible: best seller

The Bible has been translated totally and in part into 2092 languages, according to the latest information from the United Bible Societies. The whole Bible is available in 341 languages, and the New Testament in 1163.

Africa

Kikwit (Zaire)

Jean Marie Widart is happy to announce the completion of the translation of Dei

Verbum, as well as some of the Pauline letters. At the end of February 1996 a biblical meeting took place for all the pastoral workers on the First Letter to the Corinthians. Efforts are also being made to make available the document of the Pontifical Biblical Commission on the *Interpretation of the Bible in the Church*,

3. To listen to and to share the Word of God together in Christian communities - in our families, institutions, groups - placing special attention on the formation of the new generations and the leaders of Biblical pastoral Ministry.

4. To deepen our identification with Chinese culture, to encourage mutual respect, acceptance and collaboration in order to achieve consensus in multi-cultural communities with regard to promoting communion.

5. To maintain an open attitude towards our societies in order to get to know and understand them and involve ourselves in them.

6. To spread the Gospel values explicitly, with faith, courage and concrete actions, in the Chinese communities of the world, without being afraid to take on the challenges of the Word of God.

The UCCBA, and Associate Member of the CBF, is a society of Chinese biblical associations and groups throughout the world, with a commitment to biblical pastoral ministry. It was born as the fruit of the first seminar of the CBF in Hong Kong in 1985. The official foundation took place at the second Chinese Biblical Meeting in 1990, which was a preparatory meeting for the Fourth Plenary Assembly of the CBF.

More information from: Cecilia Chui, CBF, Hong Kong. Tel: (852) 2527 7077; Fax: (852) 2866 6781.

Sri Lanka

Two months ago there was an ASIPA (Asian Integrated Pastoral Approach) seminar in which the Bible was given a distinguished place and the seven steps method was presented.

We have news of the death of Bishop W. Don Silvester of Galle, one of the more distinguished promoters of the Centre of Biblical Pastoral Ministry in Sri Lanka; also of the publication of an ecumenical translation of the Bible into Sinhalese. We record our posthumous appreciation of his labours.

More information from: Alex Dassanayake, The National Seminary of Our

Lady of Lanka, Ampitiya, Kandi. Tel: 34316, Fax: 08 32343.

Tamil Nadu (India)

An interconfessional Bible in Tamil was published in 1995. The project began in 1968 and, through the efforts of many, has reached a successful conclusion.

Some of the characteristics of the translation are: it is ecumenical, interconfessional, translated from the original Hebrew and Greek, is in everyday current language, and uses inclusive language, etc.

The project has involved a team of 35 translators and more than 50 experts in the Tamil language.

More information from: Tindivanam 604 002, South Arcot DT. Tel: 91 (0)612 26 22 84.

Europe/Middle East

Ljubljana

In connection with the appearance of a translation of the Bible into Slovenian, Professor Dr. Joze KRASOVEC has organised in the Slovenian capital an "International Symposium on the Interpretation of the Bible". (18th - 20th September 1996).

The Symposium will seek to present the characteristics and peculiarities of ancient translations of the Bible to explain the currents and attributes of contemporary hermeneutics, and to make known the role of the Bible in Slavonic cultures. World experts will deal with the themes under three hermeneutic aspects:

1. The interpretation of the Bible in ancient translations (Septuagint, Targums, Vulgate) and in contemporary biblical hermeneutics.

2. The interpretation of the Bible in Slavonic translations. The organiser is hoping for a new vision of oriental traditions in the biblical translation.

3. The interpretation of the Bible in Slavonic culture: literature, art and music.

*More information from Prof. Dr. Joze KRASOVEC, Dolnicarjeva 1, SI - 61000 Ljubljana, Slovenia
Fax: + 386 61 133 04 05.*

Rome

A meeting of the sub region of Rome took place on 15th December 1995. After a short presentation Professor Nuria Calduch-Benages, MN, situated the participants in a climate of prayer and expounded upon the theme: *The Word of God, source of life: implications for religious communities.*

Her paper, based on the exegesis of Ezekiel ch. 37, described how dry things are transformed into living and dynamic communities, thanks to the Word of God.

Each participant shared what their own particular institute or association was seeking to do for the biblical pastoral ministry. Sr Maria Ko, Salesian, recounted her experiences of teaching Scripture in China.

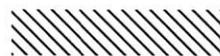
They also shared the various initiatives that were being taken as regards *lectio divina*, and the difficulties involved in making the CBF more widely known in the sub region. Nevertheless, concrete alternatives were proposed for moving ahead.

Slovakia

Prof. Monsignor Ján Maga, the director of the Slovakian Catholic Biblical Association died in the night to the 4th January 1996 at the age of 51 years.

Together with Ladislav Hanus and Jozef Kutník he translated the psalms. 1993 he became director of the new founded Slovakian Bible Association in Svit, 1994 he became Monsignor. It was very important for him to translate general theological and biblical literature for the Slovakian Church. Together with his students he made the first Evangelium synopsis in Slovakian language (1993).

With Msgr. Ján Maga the diocese Zips and the Slovakian Church lose a charismatic personality.


Books and Materials

Good News

On Sundays and Feast Days

Meditations in Pictures

A reflective companion through Liturgical Year A

The Booklet "Good News" is the fruit of many years of meditation and journeying together of bible study groups in an Austrian parish and contains, for every Sunday and Feast Day of Liturgical Year A, on one DIN size A5:

- selected key-phrases from the gospel excerpt in question leading to important points in the Good News

- an illustration, for a visual approach to the theme

- an accompanying text to stimulate and deepen one's own life

It is intended for missals, for people with no close church connections, for bible-study groups, the sick, prisoners, as well as an introduction to Sunday worship and encouragement to deeper exploration of the themes

Address for Orders:

Katholisches Bibelwerk,
Pfarre Pfarrkirchen,
Pfarrkirchnerstr. 22,
A-4540 Bad Hall.
Austria.

Le Feuillet Biblique is published by the diocese of Montreal and appears weekly (except during July and August). It is devoted to the readings of the Sunday liturgy.

The readings are explained and commented upon using the new approaches and methods. Difficulties are clarified; they are situated in the actual context and in tradition (commentaries by the Fathers of the Church or some contemporary author.

It is a good, systematic help for going deeper into the Word. From December

1995 it offers a new and novel aspect both as regards form and content.

Enquiries and further information: Centre biblique du diocèse de Montréal, 2000, rue Sherbrooke Ouest, Montréal (Québec) H3H 1G4, Tel.: 931 7311. Fax: 931 3432.

Proposals for a community reading of the Bible: the Centre catholique de formation permanente of French speaking Switzerland and *Evangile et Culture* recently published (for Christmas) its proposals for a community reading of chapters 1 and 2 of the gospels of Matthew and Luke.

The approach and the production of materials for biblical animation by these centres is very interesting.

It consists of a more ample booklet for the animators and shorter leaflets for the participants.

The graphics are excellent and lead one into the world of iconography.

Enquiries and more information: Imprimerie Saint-Augustin, CH-1890 Saint-Maurice. Tel/Fax 025166 0551.

A Christmas biblical novena: The Episcopal commission for Catechesis and Bible of Bolivia has published its biblical novena for Christmas, entitled, like the Bible Month, "I have come that they may have life and have it with abundance".

The national secretariat of the above-mentioned commission is taking very much into account, during this time, the approaching Plenary Assembly of the CBF and is using its motto for all its activities and publications.

Enquiries and more information: Calle Potosí 814, 6 Piso. Casilla 7857. La Paz. Tel. 379887.

A new translation of the Bible: On the 15th October 1995 the so-called Willibrord translation of the Bible was pub-

lished in Dutch. It is a completely revised edition of the Catholic translation published 35 years ago.

It is the official text for the liturgy and for catechesis (Bible schools in Holland and the Flemish part of Belgium).

The publication is in the charge of Nederlandse Bijbelstichting (one of the founder members of the CBF) and Vlaamse Bijbelstichting.

For more information: Prof. Frans van Segbroek, De nieuwe Willibrord en VBS (Vlaamse Bijbelstichting)-Informatie 26 (1995) 4, 73-81;

or Vlaamse Bijbelstichting, Sint Michielsstraat 6, B-3000 Leuven, Belgica Bijbelstichting Postbus 742, NL-5201 AS s'Hertogenbosch, The Netherlands.

Studium Biblicum OFM: Biblical Bimonthly published by the Franciscan Studium Biblicum of Hong Kong is offering an index of articles that have appeared in Numbers 1-100.

It is its special number (114) of November 1995 and marks the 50th anniversary of the Centre. The preceding number (113), published in September, was devoted to the Book of Wisdom.

For more information: 6 Henderson Road, Jardine's Lookout, Hong Kong. Tel: 852-576 04; Fax: 852-576 96 76.

The Venezuelan review **Nuevo Mundo** devotes a double number (170/171) to the theme *Commitment to Life* in line with the call of the country's Episcopal Conference (as already mentioned in previous Bulletins).

We want to draw special attention to the article by Pedro Trigo entitled "Dios de la Vida y los poderes".

For more information: Apartado de correos 51.608, Caracas 1050-A. Tel. and Fax: (02) 8626873.

Prophets of Yesterday and Today was the title encapsulating the contents of the third national Bible Week of Ecuador (1995). The week was arranged and published by the Episcopal Conference.

The publication consisted of two booklets, one for the animators and the other a guide for the meetings.

For more information: Avda. América 1865 y la Gasca. Apartado 1081, Quito. Tel: 593-(0)2-23 82 21; Fax: 593-(0)2-50 14 29.

Daily Reading of the Bible is a biblical agenda that is both very interesting and useful. Persons, individuals or groups, who would like to utilise the Bible for daily reading will find this a very helpful tool.

For more information, it is edited by the Centro Verbo Divino de Quito (Ecuador), Apdo. 17 03 252. Tel: 569-318.

Update is a publication of the Catechetical Centre of Karachi (Pakistan) of the Pakistani Episcopal Conference. It is always interesting.

We would like to recommend especially the Advent number (1995): *Women in Society*.

For more information: Catechetical Centre, Karachi, P.O. Box 7172, Karachi 74400.

Biblical Philately (Sacred History and that of Israel recorded on postage stamps), Agripino Cabezon Martín.

One interesting way to approach the world of the Bible and the land of the Bible is by means of postage stamps which are being issued by the Postal Services of Israel and Jordan.

These may be of interest for the biblical pastoral ministry and a useful tool for its animators who may need inspiring material.

For more information: Editorial Verbo Divino, Avda. de Pamplona, 41, 31200 Estella (Navarra), Spain. Tel: (9-48) 55 04 49. Fax (9-48) 55 45 06.

Meeting Jesus Today. Albert Hari-Charles Singer.

This is an ideal work for children and families, teachers, and groups who want to get to the source of the gospel, and all

those interested in the publication of serious and opportune work.

The way of presenting the content, as well as the content itself, corresponds to the most up to date pedagogical, biblical and theological methods.

It is not easy to come across a work that brings together all these qualities in one production. It was originally published in French by Editions du Signe, Strasbourg.

Also in French is the publication *Découvrir l'Ancien Testament aujourd'hui*. The Spanish translation is by Editorial Verbo Divino (Spain).

For further information contact the above-mentioned publishers.

A Manual for Trainers' training Seminar (BBS, Basic Bible Seminar).

As the title indicates it is a manual to help those who teach this method which is widely-used in Asia and Africa. It is published by the Centre of Lay Spirituality of the Archdiocese of Cebu (Philippines).

More information on this and other methods of biblical pastoral ministry is available in the Bulletin "Audiens et Proclamans", published on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the CBF.

The Review Bible and Church (Bibel und Kirche). Number 4, the last of 1995, was devoted to the commemoration of the hundredth anniversary of the *Woman's Bible*.

Besides recording the importance of the Bible of Elizabeth Cady Stanton (1815-1902) and its historical framework, there is also a brief history of how this affected theology and the study of the Bible in countries where German was mainly spoken.

For more information: Katholisches Bibelwerk, Silberburgstrasse 121, 70176 Stuttgart. Tel:(0)711 6192050, Fax: 6192077.

Let us Record the Future Together (Material for work about women). M José Arana (directress).

Nine articles written by different women authors. All give basic information on the chosen theme, material for reflection and proposals for action.

In the first article, as well as the proposed theme, there is also much information about groups and institutes in Spain, Europe and other places which are concerned with feminist theology or with theology produced by women. There is also a select general bibliography.

The second and third articles introduce women in the Old and New Testaments.

The fourth article deals with a new reading of the gospel of Mark.

The fifth is devoted to the study of the first letter to the Corinthians and the comparison of the body which Paul uses to explain the organisation of the Christian communities.

In the sixth one is helped to reflect upon "sexuality and other gifts".

The seventh article presents another form of creating bonds and communicating affection: the celibate.

The eighth offers an approach to crucial problems for women and for humanity: the demographic explosion: development and underdevelopment.

It is aimed at developing theological, ethical and spiritual growth.

The ninth and last offers a panorama of the theological task of women, with a very short reference to the Spanish situation. It also gives ways as to how to set up a group.

They offer pedagogical material, a list of institutes with whom one can establish contact, and a bibliography.

All is of great importance, necessary and very useful in whatever context.

For any information or suggestions contact Foro de Estudios sobre la Mujer (FEM), Romero Robledo, 25 dplo, 28008 Madrid. Edita: Publicaciones Claretianos (Débora), Juan Alvarez Mendizabal, 65 dpdo, 3. Tel: (91) 5470502.