

DEI VERBUM

Catholic Biblical Federation

THE BULLETIN

“Ut Verbum Dei currat”

Three New Saints

Seek. And Find

The Year of the Bible

From the Field

The Good Shepherd in Jn 10



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EDITORIAL

Dear Readers,



“You will laugh: the Bible” – such was the response made by the German dramatist and poet Bert Brecht (1898-1956) when he was asked what book had made the greatest impression on him in his life. At first sight, a surprising, unexpected answer, this. Brecht was after all hardly a religious, and certainly not a Christian author,

but rather one of a decidedly secular and political bent. Having been forced into exile during the Third Reich, he returned home after the war; however, he made the conscious decision to settle in East Germany. For Brecht had for a long time been a convinced adherent and propagandist of a Marxist-communist world-view. Nevertheless, it was precisely the Book of books – the Bible – that had a marked influence on him and his work.

The Bible belongs to the cultural heritage of humanity; not only is it Holy Scripture for Christians, but it can hold surprising discoveries or memorable experiences for any human being. It was this discovery-experience, made available through a variety of ways and means, that a “Year of the Bible”, organized in 2003 in many countries of Europe, attempted to bring to as wide a spectrum of people as possible – and particularly to those only marginally religious. The Bible Year stood under the motto “Seek. And Find” and everywhere met with a great and very positive response. In this issue of the BDV you can read more about the Bible Year and a few of its especially interesting activities.

“Success stories” of a very different kind, which also touch on the work of our Federation, are the biographies of three missionaries and founders of religious orders, who as of October 2003 have been numbered among the saints of the Church. Daniel Comboni, Arnold Janssen and Josef Freinademetz worked in very different ways, but all three of them helped to increase in the Church a

more conscious sense of responsibility in its assignment to be a missionary Church – through openness to other cultures and contexts, through tolerance and fraternal respect toward other people and solidarity with the disadvantaged, with those suffering from discrimination or neglect. “That the Word of the Lord may spread rapidly” – this expression from the Second Letter to the Thessalonians, with which, by the way, the Constitution *Dei Verbum* of Vatican II concludes, stands as the motto over the articles on the three new saints.

And finally, you will come across two new headings in your reading. Under the rubric “From the Field” we would like in the future, on an ongoing basis, to present articles that come from the biblical-pastoral “workplace”, and that could perhaps offer ideas or inspiration for your own work. The first in this series of articles is one from Latin America on the image of the shepherd in the Gospel of John. The second new heading we have called “Forum”. It should provide an opportunity for exchange of opinions and discussion on topics and articles of the Bulletin. In this issue you will find under this heading a few of the numerous letters we received in response to the last issue on the theme of bibliodrama.

For both of these headings (as also for the whole Bulletin) one could say that their survival depends above all on your collaboration and support. So let us know all about successful activities or successful projects; tell us your opinion on themes found in the BDV or convey your criticisms to us (e.g. per e-mail: bdv@c-b-f.org). We are always delighted to hear from you.

“Seek. And Find” – in this sense, and in the name of the whole BDV team, I wish you an interesting harvest of discoveries as you read through this issue.

Claudio Ettl



Pioneers of Universal Mission

Saints Arnold Janssen, Joseph Freinademetz and Daniel Comboni

On October 5, 2003, in a Solemn Mass in Saint Peter's Square, Pope John Paul II canonized the three European missionaries, Arnold Janssen, Joseph Freinademetz and Daniel Comboni. At first sight three very different men, marked by different biographies and animated each by very personal ideas and visions – and yet, all three are so to speak “pioneers” of the Catholic Mission in the 19th and 20th centuries. Through their work – through the founding of Missionary Orders that have since become active on a worldwide scale and through their practical missionary work in Europe, China and Africa – they stand as representatives of many other women and men who have laid the foundation for a truly universal Church which is taking shape increasingly today.

The two religious families of the new saints, the Divine Word Missionaries (SVD Fathers) and the “Comboni-Missionare” (Comboni Missionaries of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, MCCJ) have for a long time now been intensely active in the area of biblical pastoral ministry and as such also actively involved in the life of the CBF. For this reason we would like to give a more close-up introduction to the three missionaries in the *Bulletin Dei Verbum*. We will do this not only by way of looking back at their lives, but especially with a view to their significance for today: what was special, what was particularly visionary in the lives of these men, and what is their importance for today?

“Ut Verbum Dei Currat” – “Omnibus Omnia Factus Sum” Arnold Janssen and Joseph Freinademetz

Ludger Feldkämper, svd



Fr. Ludger Feldkämper, svd, was General Secretary of the CBF from 1984 to 2000. Before that he worked in the Philippines for many years where - among other responsibilities - he founded the John Paul I Biblical Centre in Vigan City. Since 2001 he is coordinator of the CBF's sub-region of Rome.

The life led by any Christian is to be a personal response to the Word of God, to an invitation or a call from God. Saints are Christians who have responded in an exemplary manner to the Word of God. The saints and the Word of God: this would be one aspect in the life of the saints and should be of particular interest to any minister of the Word.

At various times through history, hagiographers have been interested in different aspects of the lives of the saints: their heroic virtues, the significant roles they played in the Church and the world of their day. One way

of looking at saints is to see them as illustrations of the Gospel, as commentaries on the Gospel. Is it not true that in the biography of many a saint a particular word of the Gospel has exerted its transforming power?

Life of a saint – illustration of the Gospel message

Saint Augustine, hearing a child chanting “take and read” opened the Bible and chanced upon the word of Paul: “Let us conduct ourselves properly as in the day, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in promiscuity and licentiousness, not in rivalry and jealousy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the desires of the flesh” (Rom 13:13f). Saint Anthony the Great (of Egypt) heard the gospel passage on the call of the rich young man: “If you wish to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.” (Matt 19:21). He heard it and acted upon it immediately.

Saint Francis of Assisi on February 24, 1209 was struck by the Gospel about the sending out of the twelve, instructed “to take nothing for their journey” (Mark 6:8).



Immediately he understood his vocation to preach the gospel in poverty. Charles de Foucauld: The part of Scripture that touched him most was the hidden life of Jesus, his manual work as a carpenter, his humility and his silent service. This shaped his life, his vocation, and that of his followers – both Brothers and Sisters.

Saint Therese of Lisieux was searching for her vocation and her place in the Church. She read 1 Cor 12 about the different charisms – apostles, prophets, teachers – and came to Paul's invitation: "Strive eagerly for the greatest spiritual gifts. But I shall show you a still more excellent way" (v. 31) before his canticle of love. "At length," she wrote, "I had found peace of mind ... Then, nearly ecstatic with the supreme joy in my soul, I proclaimed: 'O Jesus, my love, at last I found my calling: my call is love'".

These are testimonies of great and well-known saints. The Church, in her liturgy, has followed these examples and has made efforts to choose as readings passages of the Gospel which seemed to fit especially the particular saints. For instance, on the feast of St. Jerome, translator of the Bible and patron of the biblical pastoral ministry, Matt 13:47-52 with its concluding verse: "Then every scribe who has been instructed in the kingdom of heaven is like the head of a household who brings from his storeroom both the new and the old."

The lives of St. Arnold and St. Joseph

Which words of Scripture characterized in a special way, we may ask, St. Arnold Janssen (1837–1909), the founder of three religious congregations – the Divine Word Missionaries, the Holy Spirit Missionary Sisters and the Holy Spirit Sisters of Perpetual Adoration – whose more than 10,000 members are active in 62 different countries? Which word characterizes St. Joseph Freinademetz (1852–1908) of the ethnic minority of the Ladini of Southern Tyrol, Italy, who only four years after the foundation of the Mission House in Steyl left for China, where he lived and worked and died, a Chinese among the Chinese?

In the homily he gave in Ireland on the Feast of St. Joseph Freinademetz on January 29, 2004 to Divine Word Missionaries, co-workers, benefactors and friends, Fr. Antonio Pernia, the Filipino Superior General of the Divine Word Missionaries answers these questions, thereby also quoting two Scripture texts:

"On the left side of the altar in the chapel at our Generalate in Rome, the two reliquaries of our two new saints are displayed. Each one the size of a monstrance, the reliquaries contain relics taken from parts of the body of St. Arnold and from parts of some clothing of St. Joseph. Each of the reliquaries carries a quote from the

Bible. That of St. Arnold: 'Ut Verbum Dei currat' (2 Thess 3:1 – 'that the Word of the Lord may spread rapidly and be glorified everywhere, just as it is among you.'). That of St. Joseph: 'Omnibus omnia factus sum' (1 Cor 9:22 – 'I have become all things to all people, that I might by all means save some').

Mission and inculturation as the very nature of the Church

The biblical quotes are well chosen. I believe they underline very well the significance of the life and work of each of our saints. That is to say, Arnold and the permanent validity of mission ad gentes, and Joseph and the fundamental need of inculturation in the work of evangelization. These two aspects of mission were also those which the Holy Father, Pope John Paul II, chose to emphasize in his homily at the mass of the canonization on October 5, 2003 at St. Peter's Square in Rome.



The canonization ceremony in Rome

Of Arnold, he said: 'He zealously carried out his priestly work, spreading the Word of God by means of the new mass media, especially the press. Obstacles did not dismay him ... He now helps his religious family from Heaven, to continue faithfully along the tracks he marked out that witness to the permanent value of the Church's evangelizing mission.' Words which echo the biblical quote: 'Ut Verbum Dei currat.' Of Joseph, the Pope said: 'With the tenacity typical of mountain people, this generous witness of love made a gift of himself to the Chinese peoples of southern Shandong. For love and with love he embraced their living conditions, in accordance with his own advice to his missionaries: Missionary work is useless if one does not love and is not loved. An exemplary model of Gospel inculturation, this saint imitated Jesus, who saved men and women by sharing their existence to the very end.' Here, too, words which echo the biblical quote: 'Omnibus omnia factus sum.'



The canonization of these two great missionaries underlines, therefore, two aspects of mission – namely, that mission belongs to the very nature of the Church (or, in other words, the permanent validity of mission *ad gentes*), and that genuine evangelization entails a respectful dialogue with the culture of the people (or the fundamental need of inculturation in the work of evangelization). A short reflection on each of these aspects.

Proclaiming the Gospel to all

First, mission belongs to the very nature of the Church. This is the message of the canonization of St. Arnold Janssen. Arnold once wrote: 'The proclamation of the Gospel is the first and greatest act of love of neighbour.' To be a Christian is to love the neighbour, but to love the neighbour is to proclaim the Gospel to him or her. It is impossible to be a Christian and not be a missionary. Mission is not something extra added on to the nature of the Church. Rather, mission is part and parcel of being Church. A church is never fully a church if it is not missionary. This was what Arnold tried to show by founding the mission seminary in Steyl. The Church in Germany during his time could not really be fully Church if it did not have its own mission seminary. Down through the years, this is the principle that has guided the sons and daughters of Arnold in the world. Local churches founded by Arnold's missionaries have invariably become missionary churches themselves, both *ad intra* and *ad extra*. There are many examples of this. The Church in Papua New Guinea is one – of the eight SVDs of Papua New Guinea in final vows, four are working in other parts of the world.

Respectful dialogue with other cultures

Secondly, genuine evangelization entails respectful dialogue with the culture of the people. This is the message of the canonization of St. Joseph Freinademetz. Joseph's missionary life and work in China shows that evangelization cannot be an imposition of the Gospel from outside, but a rediscovery of it from within the culture of the people. Only by becoming a Chinese among the Chinese could Joseph truly proclaim the Gospel to the Chinese. Mission entails that a missionary encounters the Gospel twice – first, in the context of his or her own culture, and then in the context of the culture of the people among whom he or she is a missionary. Joseph discovered the Gospel first as a European, but then he had to discover it a second time as a Chinese. Joseph once wrote to his family in South Tyrol: 'By now I have become more Chinese than Tyrolese. And I wish nothing else but to die and be buried among this people. I wish to remain a Chinese even in heaven.' Mission therefore entails the conversion not just of the people to

the Gospel, but also of the missionary to the culture of the people. Only then will the missionary succeed in showing that the Gospel of Jesus Christ is truly Good News.

This principle, too, has guided the brothers and sisters of Joseph down through the years. Wherever they work, they endeavour to promote respectful dialogue with the culture of the people. Studies in anthropology, linguistics and culture have invariably characterized the work of Joseph's brothers and sisters in the world. Our several anthropological centres – in Germany, Austria, Ghana, the Congo, Brazil, India, Indonesia, Japan, Taiwan, Papua New Guinea – are a witness to this principle.

Thus, Arnold: 'Ut Verbum Dei currat.' 'That the Word of the Lord may spread rapidly.' The permanent validity of mission *ad gentes*. Mission belongs to the very nature of the Church. Joseph: 'Omnibus omnia factus sum.' 'I have become all things to all people.' The fundamental need of inculturation in the work of evangelization. Mission entails respectful dialogue with the culture of the people.

Finding favour with God

I will always treasure the experience of having visited three years ago the room or the little house in Taikia in South Shandong where Joseph Freinademetz died on January 28, 1908. The house is still well preserved, and even if it has now become a little store where a family sells soap and toothpaste and food and drink of all kinds, one can still sense an air of solemnity in it – indeed, an air of holiness. On both sides of the entrance to the house, a marble plaque is attached announcing the death of the missionary. In Chinese on the left side and in Latin on the right, the words on the plaque read: 'Here in this little room, the servant of God, Fr. Joseph Freinademetz, a tireless preacher of the Gospel, outstanding in words and deeds, after receiving the last sacraments, gave his soul back to God.'

This year is our 'Year of Grace'. Grace – not just in the sense of graces or individual blessings and favours. But grace – in the sense of 'charis' – in the sense of finding favour with God. Through their canonization, Arnold and Joseph have found favour with God. As their sons and daughters and brothers and sisters we, too, share in this grace or favour. Today, let us thank God for this grace and pray that we may all be worthy of it. In particular, I pray that, like Arnold and Joseph, we all may be, as the words in that little house in Taikia put it, 'tireless preachers of the Gospel, outstanding in words and deeds'. □



Arnold Janssen



Arnold Janssen was born in the town of Goch on the Niederrhein, on November 5, 1837. As a young man of 24 he was ordained to the priesthood and he worked first as a teacher of mathematics and science in Bocholt, then as a chaplain with the Ursuline Sisters in Kempen.

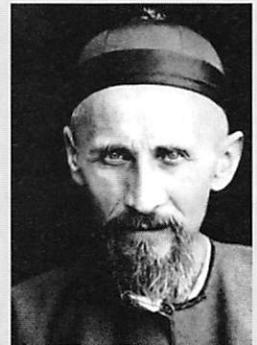
The difficult situation of the Catholic Church under the “Kulturkampf” (the conflict under Bismarck between the German State and the Catholic Church) widened his vision for the universal Church. He had the idea to found a German Missionary Order and thereby to give a new task to priests without a community. In 1875, in spite of much opposition even within the Church, he established a Mission House in Steyl, in the Netherlands – a foundation on German soil was not possible because of the “Kulturkampf” – and began to win people over to his idea. Four years later he was already able to send the first missionaries to China.

Janssen founded three Orders: the already mentioned Divine Word Missionaries (also known in German as the “Steyler Missionare”), the Holy Spirit Missionary Sisters and the Holy Spirit Sisters of Perpetual Adoration, who lived a contemplative life. When he died in 1909, almost 2,500 missionary men and women were at work in his religious communities in 13 countries of the world. Today the Steyl religious family numbers more than 10,000 women and men from 65 countries. In 1975, Janssen was beatified by Pope Paul VI. His feast day is celebrated on January 15.

Joseph Freinademetz

Joseph Freinademetz, born on April 15, 1852 in Oies, South Tyrol, was chaplain in Thurn, near Brixen, when he heard of the idea of Arnold Janssen. The young priest had an intense desire to be sent to the missions and he entered the Community of the Divine Word Missionaries. In 1879 he went to China and founded many Christian communities as an itinerant missionary. He was ridiculed, persecuted and distrusted as belonging to a foreign occupying power.

Despite all these disappointments and troubles he developed a great affection and love for the Chinese people and their culture. In the end, he expressed the desire “to be Chinese, even in heaven”. In 1908 he died of typhoid fever and was beatified by Pope Paul VI in 1975. His feast day is on January 29.





Saving Africa through Africa

Daniel Comboni

Josef Sayer



The priest, Professor Josef Sayer, worked in voluntary service in Peru from 1881 to 1988. After that he was professor of pastoral theology at the University of Fribourg in Switzerland. He is meanwhile Director of Misereor, a Catholic funding agency in Aachen, Germany.

The canonization of Daniel Comboni was not only a day of joy for the religious order founded by him, but also for the whole Church, and above all, of course, for the Christians of Sudan and in all of Africa. For, as his successor in the Bishop's Chair of Khartoum, Gariel Zubeir Wako, who has just been called into the College of Cardinals, very graphically put it: "We African Christians are sons and daughters of Daniel Comboni."

Comboni, the first Catholic bishop of Central Africa and one of the most important missionaries in the recent history of the Church, is the founder of a religious family that today does highly beneficial work in over 40 countries of the world. I cannot and will not offer here an overview of the many-faceted and exciting life of Daniel Comboni. I would like only to throw some light on a few specific points that seem to me to point the way forward for the engagement of the Church today.

1. Africans to missionize Africa

The work of the new saint began, as is well known, with a disaster: in 1859 Comboni returned as a young priest of the Institute founded by Nicola Mazza, seriously sick with malaria, from a not very successful trip on the Nile in southern Sudan. Three of his traveling companions had died. Social and missionary engagement in Africa seemed impossible, because the Europeans found it difficult to adjust to the diseases of the black continent. Five years later, Comboni received a decisive inspiration while praying at the tomb of Saint Peter in Rome: If the Christians of the Old World could not do it, then the Africans themselves would have to take over the mission of Africa. The Europeans would only have to provide adequate training and support for a sufficient number of them, men and women, so that they would then be able to preach the gospel in their own homeland. This vision of training Africans and ordaining them priests and bishops for Africa – an idea that was revolutionary for its time – has now been all but fully realized. Today almost all

the bishops in Africa are Africans. And African Sisters are doing an outstanding work of evangelization. The Church in Africa is today in a position to take its own future into its own hands. Our task can only be to stand by with our support.

2. A thought transformation is necessary in Europe

With his idea of saving Africa through Africa Comboni began a large-scale propaganda tour through France, Germany, Austria and Italy. He requested spiritual and material support from kings, bishops and nobility, as well as from simple lay people. Moreover, he called into existence a missionary magazine – the first in Italy. Comboni's aspiration was to remove the ignorance and the negative clichés regarding Africa that were dominant in Europe – a task which still continues to occupy us today. Already back then Comboni knew that the process of Christianizing and developing Africa could never succeed without a profound thought-transformation in Europe, in the Church, in politics and society. His purpose was to help the Europeans to better empathize with the foreign cultures and religions of Africa. We speak today in the work of collaborative development of consciousness-building, formation and domestic training.

Comboni knew very early that no country on earth would remain spared the confrontation with the products of European science and technology. Far-reaching transformations were likewise in the future of Africa. The saint wanted therefore to bring together into harmonious union the best of both cultures. He had a high regard for the traditional African culture. But he was convinced that no culture could develop if it remained totally self-centered. In this sense he understood the meeting of the black continent with the message of Jesus Christ as an opportunity.

Christian missionary activity of the time breathed the unchallenged spirit of colonialism and brought with it negative consequences as well, which the saint sought to confront. His goal of training native priests and bishops for Africa was an attempt to make Christianity take root in Africa by the work of Africans. His efforts point already in the direction of what we today call "inculturation". His aspirations for inculturation were in some respects already quite detailed. The Gospel would prove to be a seed, Comboni was convinced, which would gradually dispose of negative societal structures and



conditions, such for example as slavery and the suppressed status of African women. Comboni saw a common path that European and African Christians would have to travel together, and that mission would not have to create dependencies. In this sense, the saint understood mission work as a common learning process. No missionary order or institute finds the right way alone, without the cooperation and engagement of the young local churches in Africa.



Comboni missionaries during a celebratory Mass in Ellwangen

In contrast to what was the case in Daniel Comboni's time, the central question of the Church in Europe today with reference to humanity is no longer the encounter with totally foreign cultures, but rather finding one's place within a global civilization, which in consequence of globalization threatens to annihilate all earlier cultures in its maelstrom. This threat not only forces on all nations an endless series of transformations, but also threatens their stability and even their survival. The fresh thinking taking place in Europe has to address this comprehensive challenge.

3. Africa today

What would Daniel Comboni say today to the continent of which he was so fond? If we look at Africa today, we still have to acknowledge much suffering and many problem areas. Even today, Africa has to come to terms with terrible realities. Hunger and epidemics such as AIDS and malaria are decimating the population in many parts of Africa. Civil wars, sometimes waged with the barbaric use of child combatants, bring death and suffering. The African continent is on the move. It is among the losers in the globalization process. This is also due on the one hand to the corruptibility of decision-makers, widespread general corruption, the disintegration even of once flourishing countries and the lack of decisive action on the part of constitutional states, and to the greed of international powers with respect to

African resources, discrimination in international trade and the regrettable debt situation on the other. To this list must be added the many conflicts that at least appear to be based on interreligious or ethnic tensions.

These few facts offer me the opportunity to mention something that I am very struck by at the moment: namely, the unbelievable one-sidedness with which the concept of security in the great world politics of today is defined. Security is now suddenly understood with reference to the experience of suffering in connection with September 11, 2001, in New York City. And the protection of security is now linked with a worldwide "war" against the terrorists. But this is surely a limited grasp of the issue. If I say this so emphatically, I do so also on the basis of the statements of many bishops of Africa, Asia and Latin America. They of course expressed their horror and their unmitigated condemnation of this terrorist attack of September 11, as well as their deep sympathy and feelings for those left behind. And I believe they are particularly well able to express this compassion precisely because of the manifold ways in which their own peoples have suffered.

But here we come to the central point: These bishops and the people in Africa, Asia, and Latin America were able to have this degree of empathy for the affected because the danger to the security of the poor had been not only precarious, but subjected to extreme threat in some respects and often even thoroughly shattered long before September 11. Who bothered back then about the security of the poor? Who was talking about the war on poverty that kills millions every year? Shouldn't we have long since been mobilizing all our efforts to confront the hunger in the world, that scourge that makes the lives of 830 million people extremely insecure on a daily basis? Who knows whether terrorism would then have had a chance? How many billions, for example, were actually put aside after the noble declaration of the United Nations in New York, in the year 2000, at the height of the millennial fever, that they would halve the number of the hungry by 2015? In contrast, for the war against Iraq, \$ 75 billion, and then another \$ 86 billion were somehow immediately available. What forces were then mobilized, without any hesitation, to serve the security needs of the occupied country?

Trade imbalances and the huge subsidies, totalling more than \$ 300 billion, in the agricultural sector by the United States, the European Union and Japan also threaten the security of the poor – before and after September 11. In my opinion, however, it would have been better if people had taken September 11 as an opportunity to reflect on the general question of securi-



ty in the world. Where, and of what kinds, are the threats to security, and what corresponding measures must be taken? Strategies for security – as we learn from Africa – call for different approaches. And these security strategies must above all take into account the security of the poor in the matter of basic nourishment.

4. Comboni, an early champion of the human dignity of women and slaves

Comboni's work area was above all the region known today as the Sudan. As Bishop of Khartum he was an early champion of human dignity and an opponent of the slave trade. The fate of African women, too, was a major concern of his. For Carboni the liberation of Africa and the liberation of women were closely linked. At his time, African women and girls in Sudan hardly had access to an undergraduate education. They suffered from sexual exploitation and violence, the related illnesses, taboos and discrimination. It must unfortunately be pointed out that many of the problems Comboni saw back then are still relevant today. I need only mention the very widespread mutilation of female genitalia. Comboni's strategy for the promotion of women was the education of African girls, so as to effect an exponential gain. As teachers these young women were then to

return to their continent and preach the good news of liberation through Christ precisely to other African women. The significant role Comboni assigned to women in the Christianizing of Africa was likewise undoubtedly revolutionary. "Believe me," he once said to a friend, "only women and Saint Joseph will be able to bring black Africa to the Faith".

5. Conclusion

For Comboni, the real criterion for the demonstration of Christian Faith was love. This impulse that flows from the Gospel constitutes the inner drive of the members of the religious family founded by Daniel Comboni all over the world even today. "The preaching of the Gospel, common commitment to the values of sisterhood and brotherhood and human rights, missionary consciousness-building in Church and society, the promotion of well-rounded human development" – this is how the Combonis themselves formulate the job-description of the Comboni missionaries today. For its engagement and success I request the intercession of its saintly founder for the abundant blessings of God!

(Transl.: L. Maluf)

Daniel Comboni



Daniel Comboni was born on March 15, 1831 in Limone on Lake Garda and was ordained a priest in 1854. In 1857 he went for the first time to Africa, to Sudan, but was obliged to return a year later because he was gravely ill. From this experience of how difficult it was for European missionaries to live and work in the heart of Africa, Comboni developed a plan in 1864 with a new program for missionary work: Africa should be missionized by Africans and European missionaries should just be there to provide help. One day, Comboni dreamt, Africa would have its own priests, religious, catechists and bishops.

In 1867 Comboni founded in Verona the "Missionary Institute for Africa", and in 1872 a Congregation of Sisters, known today as the "Comboni Missionary Sisters". In 1873, the mission in Sudan was resumed. Comboni was consecrated Bishop of Khartoum in 1877. But already on October 10, 1881, at the age of 50, he died of malaria after intensive work and exhausting difficulties. In 1996 he was beatified by Pope John Paul II. His feast day is celebrated on October 10.

Today, almost 4,000 members – priests, lay persons, women and men – belong to communities founded by Comboni, which are active in over 40 countries world-wide. They see their task primarily as that of supporting the local church communities and bringing to expression the universal character of the Church.



THE YEAR
OF THE BIBLE

Seek. And Find The Year of the Bible in Europe – A Success Beyond Expectations

The year 2003 was celebrated in Germany, Austria and Switzerland, as well as in France and Belgium as a “Year of the Bible” under the motto “Seek. And Find”. The common objective was to bring the Book of books more strongly into the public consciousness. The following articles report on this Year of the Bible in the German-speaking countries of Europe and on three concrete projects.



Suchen. Und Finden.
2003. Das Jahr der Bibel.

The Year of the Bible in Germany

If one compares the Year of the Bible 2003 with the first Year of the Bible, held in 1992, the response this time was much more natural, more congenial and stronger by far. The media, above all television and press, seemed to be aware of it in a scope that was hardly to be expected. For example, the West German Television Company produced a Bible Night, in which well-known actors recited the whole of Genesis in the impressive translation of Martin Buber. The texts were set against a background of visual scenery that gave extraordinary vividness to the readings. Of the print media, I would mention only the largest German tabloid (BILD), which featured a daily biblical quotation, provided with a brief commentary by a prominent figure. These two examples are representative of many others.

Even at the grassroots level the Bible Year was received with greater readiness than in 1992. Numerous events and promotions were run – from the copying out of the entire text of the Bible to lectures and lecture series, special Masses, Bible Nights. There were many exhibits, often in the form of do-it-yourself affairs, that is, people made use of local resources, such as Bibles, Bible atlases or other reference works – often of great age and value – which were available in abundance in local households. After the closing Mass in Mainz particularly successful biblical activities were awarded, among others the Bible Night in Bamberg and the Bible Village in Rietberg in Münsterland

According to a poll which was commissioned by the Bible Year campaign committee in December 2003,

39% of German citizens were aware of the Bible Year and eleven million people took part in events related to it. These are numbers that exceeded all of our expectations. I myself visited numerous communities and church groups during the Bible Year. Here again, the response was far greater than expected, even from the number of participants alone. In the Bible Year we were able to reach an enormous number of people who acquired a new awareness of the significance of the biblical message for their own lives.

A particular highlight of the Bible Year was the Bible Box, a huge, blue cube in which an exhibition of biblical events could be visited on each of two levels. There were eight stations inside, where visitors could become better acquainted with a total of ten figures from the Bible, and their importance for today. The Bible Box stopped for a week in each of ten major German cities. For the Ecumenical Church Congress in Berlin it stayed even longer than that. This enabled us to reach many people who have hardly any contact at all with church and Bible. The following report will have more to say on the Bible Box.

In all, we are more than thankful for the experiences of this Bible Year. Now further ideas from the Bible Year are being collected so that these, too, can be made available to a broader public and provide a stimulus that will extend beyond the Bible Year itself. The Year of the Bible unleashed so much power of imagination and so much commitment that we can only hope will continue. Above all, however, it became clear in the course of this year that our society is not as forgetful of



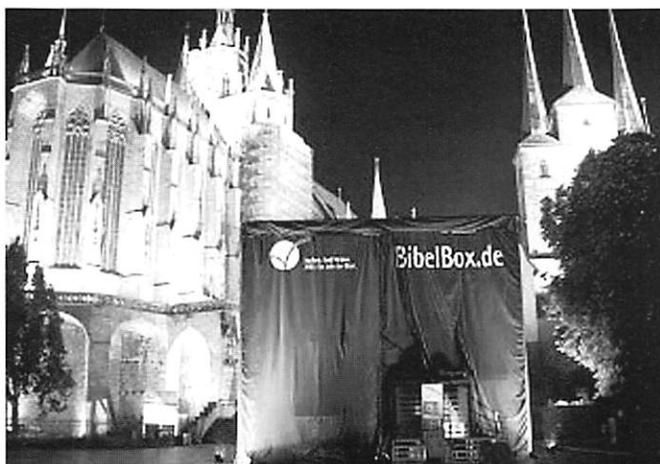
God as many may think. The interest in religious orientation is great. And this is not the least of the message of the Bible Year for the communities and churches in Germany – an encouraging message!

(Report: Franz-Josef Ortkemper)

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Meeting Biblical Figures: the “Bible Box”

Mannheim, Rostock, Leipzig, Berlin, Erfurt, Kassel, Stuttgart, Augsburg, Dortmund, Cologne: in the summer of 2003 a total of 93,000 people visited the Bible Box and were enthused. “Impressive”, “inspiring”, “makes one curious to learn more about the Bible”: these were some of the ways visitors described their impressions.



Bible Box, Cathedral Square, Erfurt

A huge, 11 cubic meter large, box-like structure, or cube, with shimmering dark-blue lighting effects stood in central squares in the ten cities as a public icon, so to speak, that soon became the talk of the town. In front of the Box stood five over-sized figures representing characters from the Bible. In the Box itself was an exhibition

of life experiences, where ten individuals from different parts of the Bible recounted their own very personal “seek-and-find stories”. Common to these ten characters from the Old and New Testaments is a certain timelessness; an ancient story of a search still highly relevant today. The stories were told in convincing stage productions, with slides, audio points, large-format representations from the fine arts. To each character was assigned a major text of the Bible – a kind of “walk-in catechesis” on the Bible. On the first level people from the pages of the Old Testament were presented (Abraham and Sara, Moses, Ruth and Jeremiah); on the second level people from the New Testament (Mary, Peter and Paul, Mary Magdalene, Jesus of Nazareth). The visitors of the exhibition were consciously included in the presentations and were invited to give themselves to the pursuit of freedom and justice, truth and hope.

Beside the Bible Box stood a platform on which a colorful live-program was offered: Music and talk, craftwork and quiz, activities and projects. This program was given a unique twist in each city. The Bible Box was jointly planned and produced by the campaign committee “2003. The Year of the Bible” and a committee from the various Christian churches and communities in the city in question. This close collaboration between national and regional organization made it possible to anchor this massive project strongly in the local communities.

(source: <http://www.2003dasjahrderbibel.de>)

The Bible Year in Austria

The media in Austria touted the whole Bible Year in Austria as a huge success, for the Bible in this year reached an audience far beyond the realm of engaged church attenders. There were two goals in particular that the initiators had set for themselves – besides the Austrian Bible Society and the Austrian Catholic Biblical Association (ÖKB), the member churches of the

Ecumenical Council of Churches and other organizations. For one thing, there were to be informative contributions on the Bible on television, radio and in the print media so as to acquaint as broad a public as possible with the Bible. For another, people’s vital contact with Holy Scripture was to be intensified or initiated through Bible Circles, lectures, et al., in the local communities.



From the side of the KB a number of emphases were set: an increased activity in expertise and counseling in biblical matters and the attempt to get well-known authors to write articles on the Bible in major newspapers; the project of the Ecumenical Bible Exhibit Living the Bible, which all through Austria provoked an overwhelming interest and drew in numerous visitors; collaboration in the production of a CD-ROM on the Bible Exhibit for all of the 6,500 schools of Austria; the organization of a trip In the tracks of the Bible in East-Jordan country to Jordan and the production of two workbooks on the Bible: In any case — the Bible and Bible Reading in the Family .

Of the many events I would mention only a few: The Bible behind walls, or more precisely, behind cloister walls represented a special drive. Various convents and monasteries contributed to this event by making valuable manuscripts and editions in their possession available to the public. A walk-in Bible was another exhibit. The special postage stamp for the Year of the Bible represented a curiosity. The following article tells about a further Bible Exhibition in the diocese of Linz. Economically speaking, we also registered a success in the sense that the sale of Bibles and reference works related to the Bible rose appreciably in 2003.

The Bible Year has come to an end, but the Bible issue will continue. Thus a student competition on the topic The Bible in Culture and Society will continue to take

place till April 2004. Besides the already ongoing ecumenical project A Common Bible for the Churches of Bulgaria the translation of the Old Testament into Romanian has begun. And the Archdiocese of Vienna has managed to stretch out the Bible Year to three years: After Seek. And Find (2003) will follow Come. And See, in 2004, and Go. And Preach, in 2005. To go along with this extension of the Bible Year a basic course on Directing Bible Circles will be offered. The first course was booked solid; two others are to follow, in the spring and fall of 2004.

The motto of the Bible Year is Seek. And Find. In Is 55:6 we find the prophetic imperative: Seek the Lord while he may be found Choose the appropriate time, the *kairos*, for the search for God is not as much a matter of course as the indicative Seek. And Find might suggest, unless we are content with looking at our own imaged reflection.

(Report: Toni Kalkbrenner) ■

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Acquiring a Taste for the Bible: A Bible Exhibition



More than 200,000 people visited the traveling exhibition Discovering our Bible. With all five senses, in which the creativity and activity of community members in the hosting parishes played an important role.

Walking through a tent the visitors enter not only another space, but also another time and another culture. The smell of incense surrounds one and sets the mood for the many things that can be seen, smelled, touched, heard and tasted. You may sniff at everything on this table reads a cardboard sign placed next to a number of different herbs, oils, and resins. Description cards for bowls filled with a large variety of herbs offer a standing invitation to activate one's sense of smell and to test one's knowledge in matters herbal.

The exhibition invites people to touch and handle things: to feel unbleached lamb's wool, to let desert sand slide through their fingers, to stroke a soft sheepskin, to feel the texture of a papyrus, to hear the rattling of seeds inside a pod from a carob tree or to hold a stone from Egypt's Mount Sinai in one's hands. Learning about, but above all experiencing this other world that constitutes the background of our Bible is an important objective of this exhibition.



There is extensive exhibition material on Judaism: A life-size Torah scroll is there as an eye-catcher, designed to encourage people to develop an interest in Judaism and its religious symbols. Prayer-bands, yarmulkes (Jewish skullcaps), a prayer scarf, various items for Sabbath and other religious festivals help to increase empathy for Judaism in the minds of visitors and an understanding of how this religion relates to Christianity.

There is a reason why it is mainly children who visit this exhibition: besides the fact that there are many things to touch and handle there is also a special series of exhibits for children in the lower regions of the display tables. The goat Ezi, the mascot of the exhibition, leads and, as it were, abducts the children into the world of the Bible. No wonder it is difficult to make one's way to many of the tables, because crowds of children are sitting around together on the ground, carving Greek letters onto "ancient" tablets or puzzling over what words come from Hebrew. There are booklets available for every age-level, to help guide children through the

exhibits. And of course there are also Bible programs to try out or play with on computers.

And what kind of a Bible exhibition would this be without something to eat and drink! Biblical delicacies invite one to acquire a taste for the Bible. Baked chickpea balls and goats cheese compete with Jacob's lentil dish, Tamar's filled dates and Sara's flat bread; dark red pomegranates alongside green grapes and blue figs make a colorful impression and cause the mouth to water. And, of course, one couldn't do without wine, a prominent biblical drink; but beer, grape-juice, water, milk and mead are also among the drinks that are mentioned in the Bible.

The number of visitors attracted by this exhibition concept as well as the rate of its diffusion show what an enormous success it is. By now there already exist eleven versions of the exhibit and even though the Bible Year is over, the exhibit remains on the road.

(Report: Ingrid Penner and Franz Kogler)

The Bible Year in Switzerland

The Year of the Bible was supposed to strengthen awareness for this magnificent book and to highlight the cultural significance of the Bible. For the initiators of the Bible Year, preliminary expectations were vastly exceeded by the course of events. Parishes, church communities, religious publishing houses and biblical associations, religious communities, educational facilities, hospitals, libraries, museums and schools all made the Bible a subject of discussion in a variety of ways and for a broad public. Among the central projects for the whole of Switzerland was a biblical weekend in Bern, with which the Bible Year was opened. A series of articles on specific passages of the Bible, accompanied by texts and photos were found in many parish leaflets of German-speaking Switzerland throughout the Bible Year. And finally, in the course of the year, a hand-written Bible in many different languages and scripts, worked on by over 2,000 writer-participants, came into being (more on this in the next article). It was a joy to note that even the secular media reported on the Bible Year and in some cases published special articles on the Bible and the variety of its interpretations.

On the Catholic side, the Bible Year was very positively received, because – or so the initiators assume – we in the Catholic tradition still have to make up for a centuries-long deficit in Bible-reading. In a published statement of the campaign committee for "2003. Year of the Bible" under the title "A Word on the Use of the Bible" one finds among other things the following:

"What delights us

Many church communities and parishes welcomed the ideas of the Bible Year and offered special events on the Bible. These exhibits showed that it is by no means only with one's intellect that one learns the Bible, but also with the heart and the hand. We would like to thank all those who took part and to encourage them and others to become involved in promoting the Bible for the remainder of this year and beyond.

What concerns us

However, precisely in this Year of the Bible, the way this Book is being used all over the world has also often been a cause of concern. In connection with the war in Iraq, for example, we noted that God and religion have been co-opted and subordinated to political goals. So, for example, as the war began both sides claimed prayer to God on behalf of their own war aims. On the Christian side biblical citations or allusions were also made with the purpose of giving religious support to their own goals. We consider it wrong to use the Bible or parts of it to justify punitive actions or wars. Violence can never have a beneficial outcome or create peace. Although the Bible itself is not entirely free of stories of war and violence, we believe this Book points to other ways that enable individuals or even whole populations to find their way back to one another. These are ways of forgiveness, dialogue and conversion to God. Christians know that in the end it is not we human



beings but only God alone who can create the Kingdom of Peace.

What we wish for ourselves

We believe contact with the Bible is successful:

- When the text is really taken seriously, as it stands. It can then speak to us, even if we cannot immediately understand everything being said
- When everyone who reads the Bible takes himself or herself seriously. People who are aware that they have their own life-stories and their own set of values have the ability to distinguish between their own concerns and the message of the text
- When individual approaches to the Bible are not absolutized. Already in the New Testament era there were a variety of approaches, but none received exclusive preference over the others

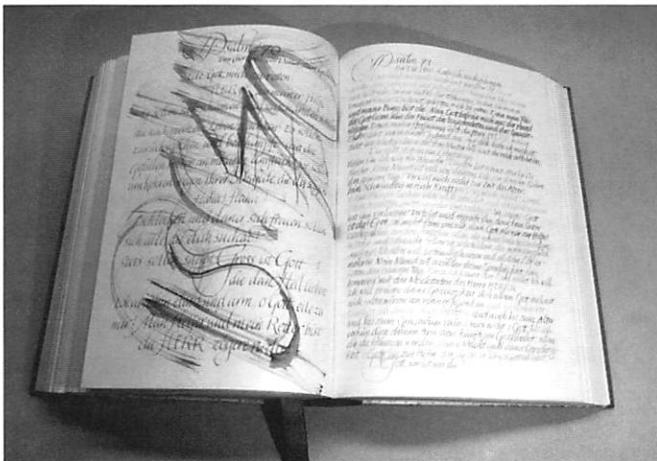
- When we are aware that a biblical text is always richer and deeper than any single interpretation could plumb
- When it leads into the great expanse and has a liberating effect. Then even those who stand on the dark side of this world come into sight.”

(Report: Sabine Bieberstein and Dieter Bauer) ■

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By People, for People: A Hand-written Bible

More than 2,000 women and men of all ages took part in the project of a hand-written Bible initiated by the Swiss Bible Society when they copied out parts of the Bible in longhand. The result was a six-volume work.



Individuals and groups from church communities and parishes and school classes, too, worked on the hand-written Bible. The copying of the text also took place in the context of special events: in Sunday services, on the occasion of Bible Exhibits or during the World Economic Forum in Davos or the world skiing championships in St. Moritz.

In our age of computers, to copy out a text by hand meant for many becoming more closely familiar with it, establishing a personal relationship to the Word, even understanding it in an entirely new way. The numerous reactions of people when they sent back the completed

text witness to a great enthusiasm and gratitude. The copying out of the sacred text is an outstanding and at the same time a simple form of Christian meditation that is able to appeal to people even today.

Leafing through the Bible edition that resulted from this project, what stands out is the different handwriting styles. They change sometimes from one verse to the next. The Bible translations that are applied also differ, as do the languages used. Besides the national languages German, French, Italian and Rhaeto-Romanic, English, Spanish, Catalan, Portuguese, Polish, Tamil, Vietnamese, Serbo-Croatian, Romanian and the Swiss dialect were all employed. So the resulting hand-written Bible reflects also the linguistic and cultural diversity of the Swiss population that concerns itself with the Bible today. At the same time, this diversity of writing styles and languages of the one Word of God is also an impressive image for the Church. The different hand-writings led to a situation where available pages were not always filled out. So, in this Bible there are also empty pages, mistakes and occasionally a dittography. Unlike the manuscripts of the Middle Ages, this hand-written Bible of the 21st century is no perfect work, but precisely a work by many people for many people. At Sunday Masses in Basel, Geneva, Lausanne, Neuchâtel, La Chaux-de-Fonds and Lugano individual volumes of the handwritten Bible were exhibited in January of 2004. The completed Bible will be made available to the public in the Federal Houses of Parliament in Bern.

(Transl.: L. Maluf) ■



The Excellence of the Shepherd

An interpretation of Jn 10:1-18

Fidel Oñoro, C.J.M.



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Opening prayer

Psalm 23

- ¹ *Yahweh is my shepherd, I lack nothing.*
- ² *In meadows of green grass he lets me lie. To the waters of repose he leads me; there he revives my soul.*
- ³ *He guides me by paths of virtue for the sake of his name.*
- ⁴ *Though I pass through a gloomy valley, I fear no harm; beside me your rod and your staff are there, to hearten me.*
- ⁵ *You prepare a table before me under the eyes of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil, my cup brims over.*
- ⁶ *Ah, how goodness and kindness pursue me, every day of my life; my home, the house of Yahweh, as long as I live!*

The image of the shepherd suggests a profound relationship and for this reason it can help us to find our bearings on our biblical path of prayer. In the biblical-spiritual pedagogy of the Church, the parable of the good shepherd is proclaimed on the fourth Sunday after Easter to make us aware of the fact that Jesus is the shepherd who gave up his life in order to give us life and who now remains among us, guiding us through history as our Risen Lord.

We are going to take a closer look at the relationship Jesus has with us today, and the kind of relationship he invites us to establish with others, in line with the direction laid out in Jn 10:11-18:

Jn 10,11-18

- ¹¹ *I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd is one who lays down his life for his sheep.*
- ¹² *The hired man, since he is not the shepherd and the sheep do not belong to him, abandons the sheep and runs away as soon as he sees a wolf coming, and then the wolf attacks and scatters the sheep;*
- ¹³ *this is because he is only a hired man and has no concern for the sheep.*
- ¹⁴ *I am the good shepherd; I know my own and my own know me,*
- ¹⁵ *just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for my sheep..*
- ¹⁶ *And there are other sheep I have that are not of this fold, and these I have to lead as well. They too will listen to my voice, and there will be only one flock, and one shepherd.*
- ¹⁷ *The Father loves me, because I lay down my life in order to take it up again..*
- ¹⁸ *No one takes it from me; I lay it down of my own free will, and as it is in my power to lay it down, so it is in my power to take it up again; and this is the command I have been given by my Father.*

1. The background of the text

“Shepherd” indicates relationship

To understand the importance of the shepherd theme in the Bible, we would do well to reflect for a moment on the context.

The Bedouins who live in the desert give us an idea today of what everyday life was like in the Israelite tribes of ancient times. In this society, the relationship between the shepherd and the flock is not merely a matter of economic interest, based on the sheep's produce and how the shepherd can utilize them for his subsistence and that of his family: by extracting their wool, drinking their milk, enjoying delicious roasts from the meat they supply, or selling them when he needs money, etc. In other words, it is not merely a relationship of ownership, or “propriety”. In the world of the Bible,



there developed between the shepherd and his flock an almost personal relationship, as happens still today with the Bedouin in the desert. Day after day these shepherds and their sheep pass the time together in solitary places, having nothing but each other to look at, because there is almost nothing else around. It is not long before the shepherd comes to know everything about every individual sheep, and every sheep recognizes the voice of its shepherd, so often heard, until it is able to distinguish it from any other human voice.

Shepherd – A recurring image in the history of revelation

Precisely because the relationship between shepherd and flock represented one of the closest possible relationships an Israelite could observe in his daily life, it is easy to understand why God uses this symbol to describe His relationship to His chosen people and to the whole of humanity. One of the most beautiful Psalms of the Psalter describes the confidence of a believer who has God for his shepherd: "Yahweh is my shepherd, I lack nothing" (23:1). But this is found also among inter-human relationships, such that in Holy Scripture the title "shepherd" is applied, by extension, to all who imitate God's concern for and dedication to the well-being of his people. The kings, for example, were referred to as shepherds in biblical times, as were at times the priests and, quite generally, all who were leaders of the people.

In this line of thought, when a prophet such as Ezekiel alludes to the leader of the people, he calls them shepherds, but in this particular case not in virtue of the positive function they were expected to perform, that of providing security and protection. Rather he names them for what they really are: irresponsible leaders, who go so far as to extract the maximum advantage from their position, through exploitation and oppression. So, alongside the image of the good shepherd, we find also that of the bad shepherd, or the hireling. In chapter 34 of the prophecy of Ezekiel, we encounter a merciless reckoning uttered by God against the evil shepherds who feed only themselves, and for this reason we see God coming to the decision that he himself will take on the care of his flock "For the Lord Yahweh says this: I am going to look after my flock myself and keep all of it in view." (Ezek 34:11).

The great responsibility of a shepherd: the life of the sheep

The criterion for distinguishing between a good and a bad shepherd was his sense of responsibility. The shepherd in Palestine was totally responsible for his sheep: if anything happened to even one of them, he had to prove that it was not his fault. This consciousness of responsibility is most impressively illustrated by two biblical passages:

Am 3:12 "Like a shepherd rescuing a couple of legs or a bit of an ear from the lion's mouth, so will these sons of Israel be rescued ..."

Ex 22:9-13 "When a man has entrusted to another's keeping a donkey, ox, sheep, or any beast whatever, and this dies or is injured or carried off, without a witness, an oath by Yahweh shall decide between the two parties whether one man has laid hands on the other's property or not... " So the shepherd must also offer proof that the sheep did not die through any fault of his own, that there was no way he could have prevented the death.

In short, the shepherd commits himself unconditionally to his sheep, he fights bravely to defend them from wild beasts and even puts his own life at risk, as we see David doing when he heroically defends his flocks (1 Sam 17:34-35).

The zeal of the shepherd: love as a source of life

All of these shepherd qualities are also displayed by God in His relationship to His own. As Psalm 23 brings out, believers in biblical times saw in the image of the heavenly shepherd the true face of God: His love, His concern, His sacrificial love for humankind. Their confidence in facing life's trials was rooted in God. In their minds and in their hearts they carried the conviction: "Yes, like a good shepherd, God risks everything for me". They lived in the certainty that God was always watching over them, always fighting on their side. This is why the prophet Isaiah proclaims "As a lion or lion cub growls over its prey, and even when a whole band of shepherds gathers against him, he is not frightened by their shouting or alarmed by the noise they make, just so will Yahweh Sabaoth descend to fight on Mount Zion and on its hill." (Is 31:4). And in the passage referred to above, from Ezekiel 34, we read that not one of the sheep remains excluded from the commitment and love of the shepherd-God: "I shall look for the lost one, bring back the stray, bandage the wounded and make the weak strong." (Ezek 34:16).

2. The central theme of Jn 10:11-18

In the New Testament Jesus takes up again the image of the good and bad shepherds, but this time with a new twist. He says: "I am the good shepherd!" God's promise has been transformed into reality, exceeding all expectations. Jesus does what no shepherd would do, what no shepherd, however good, would dare to do: "I give my life for my sheep". An attentive reading of Jn



10:11-18 brings to light how emphatically this message is communicated:

- twice Jesus says: "I am the good shepherd" (vv. 11, 14).
- Five times it is said that: "he gives his life (for the sheep)" (vv. 11, 15, 17, 18).
- Four times we read: the good shepherd "knows" and "is known" (vv. 14, 15); this shows how close is the bond between the sheep, between them and Jesus, and between all of them together with the Father (vv. 14-16)

(We could also draw up a little list of all the action-verbs the text employs to highlight the characteristic behavior of Jesus as shepherd).

Jesus' discourse on the good shepherd thus gradually unfolds, with pointed observations on the characteristic ways in which Jesus deals with his disciples, leading the reader to the point of contemplation, to a panoramic vision of the great works of Jesus on behalf of his own: *the Paschal mystery and his gift of himself*. In the development of this part of Jesus' catechesis we distinguish two parts:

- a) Verses 11-13, which treat the contrast between the good and the bad shepherd. One could label this: "the true shepherd".
- b) Verses 14-18, which describe the role of the good shepherd. This could be titled: "the excellence of the shepherd".

2.1 The true shepherd (Jn 10:11-13)

We recall the following statements of Jesus:

He is the "good shepherd"

Here a word should be said about the terminology employed in this Gospel text. Greek has two words which could be translated "good": (1) the term "agathós", which describes the moral quality of an individual as good; (2) the term "kalós", which can also be translated "beautiful", and which adds to the element of the good that of attractiveness and empathy (as when we say "he is a beautiful person" referring to internal qualities such as kindness, patience, readiness to serve, etc), such that everyone wants to be a friend of this person.

Our English translations speak of a "good shepherd" where in Greek the adjective employed is "kalós", which really means the "beautiful shepherd", suggesting that what characterizes Jesus more than mere (administrative) efficiency is the integral beauty and charm of his personality. In addition to his powerful and effective leadership, what is conveyed by referring to Jesus as the "good shepherd" is his love and empathy.

He has a "feeling of belonging"

The sheep "belong to him". For this very reason he is "trustworthy", and will fulfill his obligations come what may. At the time of Jesus, a shepherd was one who was born such; one could say that he had this job by "calling" rather than by choice. Such a shepherd had no other preoccupation; the sheep were his only concern, and when he got up in the morning, he went happily on his way to his flock. In contrast there were also men who were unable to find any other work in town and who, for want of a viable alternative, were compelled to go out into the fields to pasture sheep. And because such people did not value highly their responsibility for the flock, they were called simply "hirelings", or at best mercenary shepherds (this was their "business", their job, while their primary concern was their own subsistence).



P. Oñoro delivering a speech in Santiago de Chile

In contrast to the "hireling", the good shepherd considers his sheep as his own and for this reason he expects no pay for his work. One who works for a salary based on his activity thinks only of the money, and in the absence of this or some other compensation, he quits his job. But where there is the feeling of belonging, there is also love, and where there is love, one is happy to work even for free.

The fundamental motivation of the good shepherd is love, and one who loves wants first of all to give, rather than hoping to receive. True love means readiness even to lay down one's life: "A man can have no greater love than to lay down his life for his friends" (Jn 15:13).

His commitment knows no bounds

And that commitment is ordered to life: "I have come so that they may have life and have it to the full" (Jn 10:10). But Jesus goes further still. It is not enough to say that he came only to give life. The decisive thing is the "how": his way of working for life is to give up his own life: "The good shepherd is one who lays down his life



for his sheep". The true shepherd does not hesitate to take risks, to put his life at risk, in order to rescue his sheep from any danger that threatens them. This means he does not hold back, not even when life itself is at stake; the good shepherd loves us more than his own life, and this love becomes the source of everything he does for us. It is this aspect that will be further developed in the following section, vv. 14-18.

2.2 The excellence of the shepherd (Jn 10:14-18)

This section enters much more deeply into the matter, focusing only on the figure of the "good shepherd" (who fulfills all three of the prerequisites mentioned above). It describes the beauty of his personality, or better his spirituality, his inner secret, responding to the questions: what does it mean to give one's own life? In what does this life consist? Where should it lead? What is the ultimate root of the shepherd's dedication? In other words, the section develops the contents of the relationship of the good shepherd with his sheep – which are:

A passionate relationship (Jn 10:14-15)

The relationship of the good shepherd with his sheep is no cold, physical, impersonal relationship. It takes the form of the most cordial, personal relationship there could be: the fellowship of the Father and the Son (see the introduction and the conclusion of the Prologue of the Gospel of John 1:1-3 and 18):

"Just as the Father knows me..." The attitude of Jesus carries the imprint of his relationship with the Father. Father and Son know each other profoundly, live a life of mutual trust, they value one another, they love each other intensely.

"I know my own..." If the relationship of Jesus with us is of this kind, we can understand that the shepherd relation is a volcanic, passionate, ardent relationship. And if this is how He is with us, then we should relate to Him in the same way: "my own know me".

Why does the Evangelist speak here of "knowing" rather than loving? Because "love" rests on a personal "knowledge". For Jesus, the "good" shepherd, we are not numbers; He knows our story, our problems, our defects – all of our characteristics and qualities. Because He knows us, He loves us; which means that He accepts us as we are, and takes us fully into communion with Himself. But we have to see the other side of this: "Jesus" should not be for us a mere name; we should come to know Him ever better, as the "good, the beautiful shepherd", and develop a relationship with Him marked by a profound and genuine love.

The relationship with Jesus, the "good shepherd", is one of intimate communion. The good shepherd does not keep us at a distance; he does not want us to remain small and immature. We must rather continue to mature till we are able to enter into personal communion with Him.



"The Good Shepherd", a painting by the German artist Friedrich Overbeck (1789-1869)

A relationship that makes room for all (Jn 10:16)

The communion that is established with Jesus begins gradually to take hold of all our relationships and has as its goal a life united (with all its varieties and complexities) in the love of Jesus. Love presupposes "knowledge", but later a unity is imposed on the differences, because love is "unifying":

The zeal and concern of the Jesus-shepherd is not limited to the people of Israel. The task he has received from the Father is to care for the whole of humanity, to fashion one flock, one community of believers in him. In the ultimate analysis, this is his mission. No one is excluded from his concern, and so the presence of God's love in him is for all people. In this unity we can see two great historical lines: (1) a vertical one that



binds together past, present and future (community of Israel, community of the Twelve, community of all future believers); and (2) a horizontal one, which unites the various groups of believers in Christ, but also reaches out to all non-believers.

Through Jesus, who is the one shepherd, and through communion with Him, all people (and all communities) are called to become one great community. This *communio*, which we human beings could never reach on our own (no matter how many coalitions we form) will be His work. We will all be able to live in community so long as we keep our gaze fixed on Jesus, the one shepherd. The excellence of every human pastor will be measured by his ability to create unity wherever he is – a unity centered not around himself but around Jesus.

Fidelity: root of the passionate and unifying love of the good shepherd (Jn 10:17-18)

The catechesis on the good shepherd ends with a profound contemplation of the “paschal mystery”. The evening of the good shepherd’s life, its glory, its fullness is the offering of his life on the cross, in the hour of faithfulness.

This last criterion of the shepherd’s excellence is linked to the preceding one. Note that in the context of verse 16 (on the unity to which the shepherd leads us) the statement “I lay down my life” is repeated, as a kind of inclusion. This makes it clear that it is on the cross that Jesus constructs this “great unity”. For he dies precisely “not for the nation only, but to gather together in unity the scattered children of God” (Jn 11:52).

But if we look at this last part internally, we note that the reference to God-Father brackets verses 17 and 18: “The Father loves me...” and “this is the command I have been given by my Father.” The relationship of Jesus with the Father explains his fidelity and that fidelity is what sustains his “excellence”.

This fidelity:

- is sustained by the foundation of the Father’s love
- is lived from freedom
- and is expressed in obedience

This fidelity takes its form

- in “giving” and “receiving” (note the repetition of these terms).
- in “autonomy” (I have the “power”) and “responsibility” (he acts for, or on behalf of)
- in hearing the command (the “order”) and responding to it (obedience: “I have received it”)

Finally, we note that in the center the statement is made:

“I lay it (my life) down of my own free will.” And he continues: “And as it is in my power to lay it down, so it is in my power to take it up again.” Ultimately, the “power” of Jesus (a term which is repeated twice for emphasis) is exercised in the responsible act of “giving himself”. Like everything else, it is supported by the foundational love of the Father, from whom he receives everything (life is always something received) and to whom he is bound by a single love (the root of his life is a mature love: which is one with that of the beloved). This is the great awareness of Jesus on the cross, the awareness he has at that sublime moment when he is giving “life in abundance” to all his sheep. Everything was based on that incredible spark of Jesus’ love.

3. Let us cultivate the seed of the Word in our lives

- To whom is this beautiful passage on the good shepherd addressed today? Let us not forget that we read it as disciples, as community, as leaders.
- What does this passage say to all those around us who are tired, wounded, disappointed, to all who have a heavy burden to carry, who are living in sin, who are lost and without orientation, who feel desperately in need?
- What is the difference between the good and the bad shepherd? What identifies one as a “true” shepherd?
- What values are required for a shepherd to reach a high grade of “excellence”? What is the foundation for such an excellence?

And the same Word can generate new questions in us.

(Transl.: L. Maluf) ■



Life of the Federation

AFRICA

Ghana: Dei Verbum Refresher Course 2003

Twenty-three participants of former Dei Verbum courses representing six different dioceses in Ghana met in Adoagyiri-Nsawam from August 25 to 29 for a Dei Verbum refresher course. The meeting was marked by the Sixth Plenary Assembly of the CBF which took place in Lebanon in 2002.



The two delegates from Ghana, Ms. Mary Tse and Fr. Jolly Mudakkampurath, svd, gave an overview of the course and results of the PA. Afterwards the participants dealt intensely with the Lebanon Final Statment. A workshop headed by Fr. Emmanuel Fianu, svd, was devoted to the "Biblical Pastoral Ministry in the Pluralistic Context of

the Ghanaian Situation". At the end of the course a Final Statement was drawn up, excerpts of which follow:

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The biblical pastoral ministry situation in Ghana

We have been inspired by the efforts being made to promote the biblical pastoral ministry in certain parts of the country. Instruction is being given to lectors to read the Bible as proclamation of the Word of God. The Liturgy of the Word is being celebrated with meaning to the people of God in some dioceses. In many parts of Ghana, catechists are being formed to resound the Good News to the lay faithful. Sunday Schools have sprung up in almost every diocese to present the Word of God to children in ways that touch their lives. In scattered dioceses, lectio divina is taught to enable the people of God to prayerfully read the Bible following this ancient but useful method of reading the Bible in the Church. Attempts are being made to present the Bible to the youth through correspondence courses and publications such as the "Catholic Messenger", "God's Word for the Day", and the "Catholic Standard" to help bring the Word of God to many faithful. Yet we feel that a lot more can be done to promote the biblical pastoral ministry in Ghana.

The reality of pluralism

We recognize the ramifications and effects of today's pluralistic world. "Pluralism is a reality more and more present even in the Church, called since its beginnings to be one in diversity. But the Church itself struggles with difficulties because of certain fun-



damentalist and exclusive mentality of some of its members. In the ecumenical context, the reading and interpretation of the Bible itself becomes a stumbling block on our way to unity.” (Lebanon Final Statement [herein after FS], I,4.7).

We learn that much as there is enrichment in diversity for a harmonious living on the one hand, the consequence of diversity is having devastating effect on the other hand, especially on the minority and the weak. In Ghana, the spontaneous call for a peaceful general election 2000 and the subsequent joint programmes held by all religious groups to achieve the objective indicate how beautifully religious pluralism can be used to advance the pursuit of peace, harmony, human liberation and social justice. On the contrary, the diversity in morals and beliefs of the various religious groupings has given cause to many religious conflicts in our society, resulting in divisions in families, hatred, rivalries, apologetics and misery.

The challenges

Mindful of our commitment that the Word of God is meant to be a “blessing for all nations” (Gen 22:18), we share in the conviction of the Sixth Plenary Assembly of the Catholic Biblical Federation (CBF) that today’s pluralistic world demands that “we recommit ourselves to explore a new biblical and theological vision as well as approaches in the quest for a spirituality of communion that should be the characteristic of the new millennium.” (FS, II,6).

We are challenged by the story of Lebanon, the venue of the Sixth Plenary Assembly of the Catholic Biblical Federation. Lebanon is a land of the Bible, visited by Jesus himself and his disciples; a country in which adherents of the three religions of the children of Abraham (Judaism, Christianity and Islam) are at home; a country at the crossroads of cultures and religions; a country which has suffered from rivalries and wars and now experiences a new revitalisation; a country in which “interreligious dialogue is a respectful and sincere meeting in which the encountering parties want to know each other, to learn from one another, to enrich each other and to love one another” (message of the Synod of Bishops for Asia, no.5, cf. FS, I,2).

Our response

To discern “ways of life” (Acts 2:28) that we want to walk as Christians in our pluralistic world, we turn first of all to Jesus Christ who is our Way (cf. Jn 14:6). Jesus transcended cultural and religious barriers in order to be faithful to the plan of God for all people (Mt 8:5-13; 12:15-21; Lk 10:25-37) and to proclaim by word and deeds the universal fatherhood of God (Mt 15:21-28; 25:31-46; Lk 4:18-21).

Looking at the ways of the Early Church in the Acts of the Apostles, we note that the variety of languages, cultures and nationalities to which the one Good News reaches out on Pentecost Day is a vivid affirmation of plurality as the design of God for humanity (cf. 2:6,8,11). In the “conversion of Cornelius, we recognize the ‘conversion’ of Peter expressed in these words: ‘Now I see that God shows no partiality’ (10:34). By making them [the disciples] cross the boundaries of ethnicity, culture and language, the Spirit enables them to discover that all ‘are God’s children’, ‘living, moving and existing in God’” (Acts 17:28; FS, II,2).

To admit the reality of pluralism is to begin to think of a harmonious way of living. “The Church has to always remain attentive to the dynamic movement of the Spirit for uniting people by new bonds. It is distinctively a movement for co-pilgrimage with the ‘others’, those who are different from us. In this sense, to be religious will also mean that we should seek the path of an interreligious approach to life and service. This



demands willingness to know, learn from and relate with others" FS II,3). Therefore, we have to seek common grounds that unite us, in the spirit of openness and reciprocity.

In designing our response to the reality as ministers and servants of the Word, we turn to the Word of God as the source not only of our vision, but above all, as the source of divine power (cf. Gen 1:3ff; Jn 1:3; Rom 1:16).

In the light of this, we reiterate the call by the CBF on all the faithful to see the Word of God as an important tool for the transformation of our pluralistic world through

- an attentive and respectful reading of the biblical text
- the plurality of methods and approaches in understanding the Word
- celebrating the Word in community
- reading Scripture in the life context;
- "inculturated" reading which presupposes a respectful and in-depth encounter with a people and its culture
- reading from the perspective of the poor
- prayerful reading of Scripture.

Recommendations

After a careful consideration of the realities of diversity in our Ghanaian situation, and taking into account the challenges of the biblical pastoral ministry, we recommend the following for the growth of the biblical apostolate in Ghana:

1. We call for the institution of a National Bible Week to be celebrated in every parish.
2. We encourage the enthronement of the Bible during some liturgical celebrations in the church.
3. We urge our priests and Church leaders to encourage and make it possible for us to put our training at the service of the faithful.
4. We call for the promotion of a greater awareness of the importance of the Bible within the life of the church.
5. We call on all to encourage the development of biblical formation programmes for the clergy religious and the faithful at all levels of the church, giving particular attention to the poor and the deprived.
6. We urge the Department of Pastoral Care of the National Catholic Secretariat to make accessible and affordable the Bible and other biblical literature to the faithful in their own languages, and to organize national biblical formation programmes, aimed at equipping ministers of the Word for the task of building Christian communities.
7. We urge all the faithful to see the need to work more at achieving a unified religious pluralism in Ghana so that different religious organisations can co-exist peacefully.
8. We urge all Catholic faithful to actively join hands with our separated brethren in the celebration of the Annual National Christian Home Week and related activities, in the pursuit of ecumenism.
9. We again urge all our faithful to work more at achieving national unity by making the Word the centre of our lives.
10. We reiterate our earlier call for the establishment of a National Biblical Commission to co-ordinate the activities of the biblical pastoral ministry in the country (cf. Final Statement, Dei Verbum course 2000, no. 3.3).
11. We appeal to our bishops to take advantage of the major priority set by the Catholic Biblical Federation to support Africa in the next six years (2002–2008), by seeking assistance to promote the biblical pastoral ministry in Ghana (cf. FS, III,4.4) □



Kenya: BICAM Meeting of Coordinators and Animators of Biblical Apostolate in Nairobi

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From November 16 to 22, 2003, 25 biblical apostolate coordinators representing 13 African countries, met at Mary Ward Centre, Nairobi, Kenya. The theme of the meeting was "The promotion of God's Word in Africa and Madagascar". This is a familiar theme but the framework of the discussion throughout the period of the meeting was planned in such a way that it revolved around a well-known passage of Saint Paul on unity and diversity in the body of Christ (1 Cor 12:12-27). Conversely, the Pauline passage remained the guideline and the reference point of all the activities of the meeting, spiritual and liturgical exercises, talks and discussions, sharing of experience, and planning for the future.



In his keynote address, Fr. Terwase Henry Akaabiam, Director of BICAM, urged the participants to discuss the promotion of God's Word and Love in Africa and Madagascar with Paul's analogy of the body and its constituent parts in 1 Cor 12:12-27 in view. He called the attention of the participants to the challenges of the text and of biblical apostolate today, while stressing the need for team spirit, interdependence, mutual respect etc. among all the coordinators of biblical pastoral ministry on the continent and the Islands.

The working session began on Monday, November 17, with the reports of biblical apostolate activities in the various regions, countries and institutes. On the three following days the speakers delivered their talks which generated many discussions among the participants both in plenary and in small groups. Fr. Moïse Adeniran Adekambi, Deputy Director of BICAM, gave the first talk on "Relaunching BICAM", Alexander M. Schweitzer, General Secretary of the CBF, disclosed to the participants the activities and structures of the Federation, with special regards and suggestions concerning Africa and, finally, Dr. Jean-Claude Loba of the United Bible Societies (UBS) presented a paper on the organization and activities of UBS. He ended the presentation with the question in which areas the participants could imagine to collaborate with the UBS.

There were two major sessions for group discussions, with two sets of questions to guide them. The first one referred to the keynote address and to relaunching BICAM, the second one to the role of CBF with regard to the African continent. Some of the questions during these sessions dealt with the collaboration among biblical apostolate coordinators and animators in general, the collaboration in training programmes, translations, production and in the distribution of the Bible and the question whether BICAM should be a mediator between biblical apostolate coordinators on the African continent and the Islands and CBF and the funding agencies.



Apart from the Bible sharing, the participants gathered every day in the evening to celebrate Vespers and the Eucharist. The workshop ended with an evaluation by the participants who found the meeting necessary and useful and who made valuable suggestions and comments for similar future events.

During the assembly the following resolutions and recommendations were passed:

Resolutions

At the end of our deliberations, we have resolved to intensify:

Collaboration and cooperation with all individuals and groups involved in the promotion of God's Word and Love in Africa and Madagascar so that the Bible will become a source of life, guide and prayer among adherents of Christianity on the continent and the Islands.

Efforts towards making the Word of God accessible and affordable to God's people in Africa and Madagascar.

The promotion of biblical values of peace, unity, justice, humility, selfless service etc. on the continent and the Islands by embarking upon workshops or seminars such as Bible and Peace, Bible and Unity, Bible and Culture, Bible and Fundamentalism, Bible and Youth, Bible and Family, Bible and Governance, Bible and HIV/AIDS, Bible and the Disabled, Bible and Superstition.

Recommendations

While recognizing and appreciating ecumenical projects and programmes concerning the Word of God in Africa and Madagascar, we call for more open collaboration and cooperation among members of different Christian denominations, especially in the areas of Bible translation/review, publication and diffusion on the continent and the Islands.

As we commend the efforts of those nations that celebrate an Annual Bible Week, we recommend that the same be carried out in all countries of Africa and Madagascar.

In view of the importance of the Bible in our lives as Christians, and in response to the call of Pope John Paul (*Familiaris Consortio*, no. 61), we recommend the enthronement of the Bible in every home, the daily reading and sharing of God's Word among members of every family in Africa and Madagascar.

In order to make the Word of God available to all Christians in Africa and Madagascar in languages they can read and understand, and at affordable prices, we call upon people of good will on the continent and the Islands to donate generously to the project known as "Access to the Bible in Africa and Madagascar".

(Report: Moïse Adeniran Adekambi)

AMERICAS

Colombia: Training for Life – The Villa Paúl

Funza – a suburb of Bogotá. This is where one finds the Villa Paúl, the house in which the novices and theology students of the Congregation of the Mission – Vincentians receive their training. The Colombian Province of the Vincentians has been an associate member of the Catholic Biblical Federation since 1978. During his stay in Colombia in September 2003, Alexander M. Schweitzer was afforded the opportunity of a visit of the Villa Paúl and of intensive exchanges with its novices, students and professors. The following are excerpts from his report:

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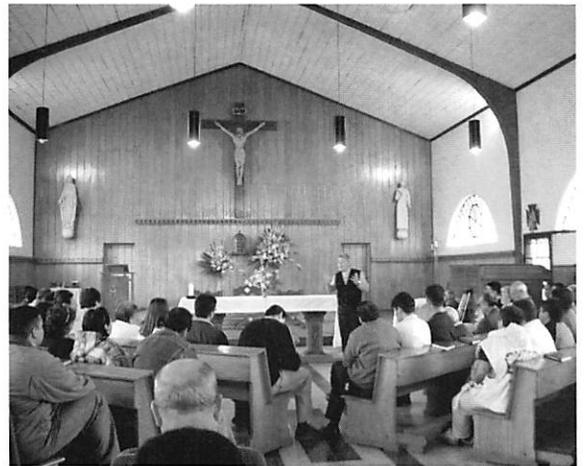


“In the Villa Paúl the membership of our Province in the Catholic Biblical Federation finds its clearest expression”, explains the Provincial of the Vincentians in Colombia, Fr. Gabriel Naranjo. The most striking evidence of this is the way in which the life of the Villa Paúl is set within a larger ecclesial and social context. This takes place concretely not only through the regular practica of the students and their engagement in various local settings, but is also firmly anchored in the self-consciousness of the Vincentians.

Holistic view of man

About fifteen novices are currently living and studying in the novitiate of the Vincentians. The theological seminary numbers exactly forty students. In spite of the differences in training programs the novices, seminarians and teachers view themselves as a community and organize many elements of their community life together. Biblical pastoral ministry plays an outstanding role here.

The program of study and training of the Villa Paúl takes into account a holistic view of man. It consists of five “modules”: intellectual training, spiritual training, pastoral training, apostolic vocation and human development. Individual *lectio continua*, common *lectio divina*, work in groups on topics such as Vincentian spirituality and apostolic vocation, regular pastoral practica on two focal points of Bogotá society, as well as continuous contacts and exchanges with friends, relatives and fellow Christians characterize life in the Villa Paúl.



Besides the members of the Congregation, a large Vincentian lay movement also exists; the two groups maintain very close relationships. The common calling, lived in different characteristic ways, is also fostered through regular common events. Every weekend, group Bible work takes place in the Villa Paúl; once a month Bible weekends are organized for members of the Vincentian lay movements as well as for other interested individuals. The fact that they are embedded in a larger family gives an element of tangible stability to the members of the Congregation; on the other hand the Houses of the Congregation, and in particular the Villa Paúl, represent a spiritual center for the members of the lay movement.

Living the Bible

The fact that scientific study of the Bible and a personal, prayerful approach to the Bible belong inseparably together comes to expression in the regular Bible work of the Vincentians with their guests and in local settings, such as neighboring parishes and the slums of Bogotá. Together with the professors, and in variously assembled work groups, the seminarians are developing materials for this Bible work, which in most cases deals with a Gospel or a Letter from the New Testament.

As a rule, these booklets contain an exegetical introduction to the text (with indications on the author, time, place, theme, structure of the text, etc.), followed by instructions for personal appropriation of the text in the form of *lectio divina*. Here the booklets follow the classical methods of *lectio divina* (*lectio, meditatio, oratio, contemplatio*) and apply these to selected biblical passages. Of course, not all the exercise books follow this scheme strictly. At the end of the booklets one typically finds references to helpful secondary



literature. In the concrete Bible work in the communities a number of different methods come into play: from little charts that are given out to the participants of the Bible group and that contain information, questions and answers on the text (sometimes in quiz form), to pictures in the style of comics that evoke interesting associations in their strangely suggestive picture-language. At present such helpful tools are available for Bible work in the communities for the Synoptic Gospels and for all 21 Letters of the New Testament; further issues in this series are in the works. The experiences of the seminarians from this concrete Bible work and from this personal contact with the Bible (*lectio continua*, *lectio divina*) flow back again into the scientific work, the study of biblical exegesis.

New impetus for education

One of the priorities of the Catholic Biblical Federation, explicitly mentioned in the Final Statement of the Plenary Assembly in Lebanon, is the bridging of the gap that sometimes still exists between scientific biblical exegesis and a life-related contact with the Bible. The experience that an outstanding scientific-exegetical training does not automatically guarantee fruitful work in biblical pastoral ministry is not limited to Latin America but is a reality in the entire Church. In order to change something here, it is necessary to go to the root of the problem and to give more focused attention to the places of theological training.

The Villa Paúl of the Vincentians in Funza, Colombia, and its program could – *mutatis mutandis* – serve as a possible model for other courses of biblical-theological training. And perhaps it also offers one or another element of stimulation for religious houses and other places of spiritual training.

Chile: Sixth Biblical Pastoral Conference of the Cono Sur Zone

The words of the prophet Amos, “a famine not of bread ..., but of hearing the word of the Lord (Amos 8:11) were the theme of the Sixth Biblical Pastoral Conference of the Cono Sur Zone of FEBIC-LAC which was held in Santiago de Chile from September 29 to October 3, 2003. The following is a report about the Conference including quotes from the Final Statement.

Representatives of the southernmost countries of the American continent such as Uruguay, Paraguay, Argentina and Chile met in a retreat house originally built as a Jesuit novitiate by Blessed Alberto Hurtado, a man who enjoys great reverence in Chile because of his commitment to the poor and to the social teachings of the Church. They met with the coordinator of the Cono Sur zone, Fr. Juan Bendinelli, sp, with the General Secretary of the CBF, Alexander M. Schweitzer, with the coordinator of the CBF subregion Latin America and the Caribbean, Fr. Jesus Antonio Weisensee, with a Latin American representative of the Executive Committee of CBF, Fr. Gabriel Naranjo, cm, as well as with the zonal coordinators Frs Bernard Latus, svd and Laurentino Fernández, svd.

The meeting started with a liturgy and the enthronement of the Word. After lauds and the Eucharist, the mornings were dedicated to the messages of the General Secretary of the CBF and the zonal coordinators before delegates devoted themselves to the main talks and discussions. The first day was introduced by Fr. Jesús Weisensee with his reflections on the topic of “Revitalization of Biblical Pastoral Ministry”. On the following day Fr. Eduardo Pérez-Cotapos, ssc, from Chile and Fr. Fidel Oñoro from Colombia gave lectures on the three forms of the presence of the Bible in the life of the Church. The titles of these lectures were: “The Word of God, School of Interpretation” and “The Word of God, School of Prayer.” On Wednesday, Fr. Angel Mario Caputo from Argentina followed with his contribution under the title “The Word of God, School of Evangelization”.

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On September 30, the Feast of Saint Hieronymus, there were three introductory working groups on approaches and methods of biblical exegesis: the cultural anthropological approach (directed by Bishop Santiago Silva), feminist exegesis (directed by the theologian Doris Muñoz) and the pragmatic linguistic method (directed by Fr. Gonzalo Bravo). All participants attended these working groups and for each one they offered new impulses for the exegesis of particular texts.

October 1 was dedicated to the question of the presence of the Word in the life of the Church offering dialogues that focused on the following topics: “The Bible in the Culture of Images”, “The Bible in Popular Piety”, “The Bible in a Globalized Society”, “The Bible and New Ethical Challenges” and “The Bible and Ecumenism”.

On the following day, Fr. Pedro Ossandón, Deputy Secretary of the Bishops' Conference of Chile gave a talk entitled “Pastoral Ministry and Biblical Animation in Pastoral Ministry – Growing Dialogue”.

On the basis of these contributions the Final Statement of the conference was elaborated. This was done in a participatory manner with two editing sessions in plenum and follow-up revision by the bishops. The document contains a short historic review of the zonal conference, a clarification of the definition of the concept of pastoral theology/ministry as well as the definition of important criteria and challenges. A reception on Tuesday evening with some folkloristic presentations offered some relaxation to the participants. On the afternoon of October 1, the participants were invited to visit the coast, where Fr. Enrique Opazo, pastor of Reñaca in the town of Viña del Mar amazed everyone by showing the results of an intercession by Saint Expeditus. Instead of ten years it took only one and a half years to build his magnificent church. This fact as well as the overcoming of various other difficulties gave evidence to the fact that God is free to intervene in history.



The following afternoon was dedicated to the reports of the delegates of the different countries and regions about their biblical pastoral activities in their particular zones and to the answering of questions in plenum. In this context ample space was given to the theme of spreading the Word and the reception of the biblical message as it first takes place in family catechesis, in the preparation for the Eucharist, in Bible meetings and grass roots communities. Moreover, the one hundredth edition of the Pastoral Bible in Latin America with approx. ten million copies and the increased spreading of *lectio divina* and other forms of biblical reading material in recent years were discussed. Also remarked upon was the increase of Bible Weeks and Bible Months – in some countries also accompanied by national or diocesan teaching aids, often created with the direct support of biblical scholars – and the special impulse for biblical pastoral ministry which came from three years' preparation of the millennium celebrations centered around the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

In the evening small groups of participants not coming from Chile visited some parishes of the Diocese of Melipilla. There they shared with the parishioners various forms of Bible-reading, and tasted food lovingly prepared by the local people. The Chilean participants meanwhile held their first biblical pastoral meeting with representatives



from most dioceses. Teams from each country had prepared an exhibition of materials and representatives of various publishing houses were also present displaying their publications.

On the last morning Msgr. Enrique Troncoso, Bishop of Melipilla, paid a visit to the delegates. He is the bishop of the rural diocese in which Fr. Hurtado's house is located. Again there was a short greeting with the national Cueca dance. After the Misa Chilena accompanied by local music, the various activities were evaluated. The representatives of the six subregional zones of Latin America and the Caribbean presented their problems and successes and the CBF General Secretary gave an overview of the Federation with an eye to a global perspective. After a last evaluation of the Final Statement and some final speeches the participants exchanged farewell gifts amongst themselves.

After the meeting two groups were staggered to visit the Institute for Catechetical Pastoral Ministry in Chile "Catecheticum" which plans to offer its specialized course in biblical pastoral ministry in March 2004 again. This course offers three accompanied internships lasting one trimester each and is the only of its kind finishing with a licentiate conferred by the Pontifical Salesian University in Rome.

The conference in Santiago offered a balanced mixture of exchange of experience, well-founded theological and pastoral reflection and discussion as well as in-depth data on biblical pastoral work. This is reflected in the Final Statement. Many of the contributions and further documentation about the Conference can be found in *La Palabra Hoy* 110 (2003) and 111 (2004) and on the internet under <http://www.iglesiachile.org/canales/biblia/febic/index.html>.

Following are some extracts from the Final Statement of the Pastoral Conference:

What do we mean when we say "biblical animation in pastoral ministry"?

- ❑ God animates by Word and Spirit the entire life of His people. All pastoral activity begins with listening to the Word and receiving an answer.
- ❑ The Council admonishes us: "...like the Christian religion itself, all the preaching of the Church must be nourished and regulated by Sacred Scripture" (DV 21) This calls for a re-thinking, a conversion: the Bible should become the "soul of sacred theology" (DV 24) and therefore it should also become the soul of the proclamation of the faith so that the understanding and prayerful reading of Holy Scripture in the living tradition of the Church motivates all pastoral workers in their work of evangelization and imbues pastoral activities with a new spirit (cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 113). A metaphor might be of aid in understanding this better: the Bible is not simply one of the branches of the tree of the Church, but the sap that flows through its trunk and through all its branches.
- ❑ Moreover, this means the step from "biblical pastoral ministry", as one among many forms of pastoral ministry, to "biblical animation in pastoral ministry". The living Word of God is recognized as the source and model of all church activities – beyond the actual book itself. Imbuing biblical pastoral ministry with the spirit of the Word of God is brought about by the same Spirit who inspired the authors of the Sacred Books and encouraged the apostles in the proclamation of the Crucified and Risen Jesus and who became the key to the entire Bible and to human history.
- ❑ This biblical animation in pastoral activities is supported by specific biblical pastoral ministry with trained staff and specific tasks; once it has been established, it becomes the supporting pillar of the entire biblical pastoral ministry. For all the faithful and in every community as well as in all pastoral activities it seeks out and encourages the



“encounter with the living Christ” which leads to an “authentic process of conversion, community and solidarity” (*Ecclesia in America* 8) in reading and understanding the biblical message as the Word of God, true foothold and life for the Church and “pure and everlasting source of spiritual life” and of evangelization (cf. DV 21). “All scripture is inspired by God and can profitably be used for teaching, for refuting error, for guiding people’s lives and teaching them to be holy” (2 Tim, 3:16).

Criteria for biblical animation in pastoral ministry

Biblical animation in pastoral ministry should

- ☐ always create a direct relationship to the text with an open Bible in the hands of those learning; if we do not succeed in this, the texts remain merely theoretical;
- ☐ competently enable the vitally important contact with Scripture using suitable methods for the comprehension of the text in its entire challenging meaning – creating a contextual and situational reference;
- ☐ enhance a reading of the Bible that centers on Christ in the view of becoming a follower of Jesus, identifying with him in unity with the Church;
- ☐ promote the personal reading of the Bible and its proclamation in the community embedded in the adoration and celebration of God's miracles throughout history as an answer to the One who speaks to us through these miracles;
- ☐ give preference to a reading of Scripture which enlightens the life of our communities, in order to change people and situations to be more in line with the message of the Gospels;
- ☐ should, through dialogue with the various pastoral offices and groups of the faithful, lead the latter to find incentive and direction for their actions and testimony in Holy Scripture.

Some Challenges

The present situation of our local churches confront us with the following great tasks:

- ☐ To acknowledge that the biblical animation in pastoral ministry begins with the conversion of the “shepherd”.
- ☐ To make available appropriate training facilities in biblical pastoral ministry so that those responsible in the various forms of Christian activities may develop their own individual methods for biblical animation.
- ☐ To strengthen and support international, national and diocesan training- and formation- centers for those working in biblical pastoral ministry.
- ☐ To incorporate biblical animation in the training of seminarians and clerics.
- ☐ To offer means and facilities for updating biblical knowledge for clerics, members of religious orders and all pastoral workers, in order to go about this renewal of biblical pastoral ministry.
- ☐ To spread prayerful reading of the Bible as a basic means of Christian animation in all areas in obedience to the Spirit who renews the face of the earth according to the plan of God.
- ☐ To offer conferences for biblical pastoral animation on a parochial, diocesan and national level.
- ☐ To find ways and means for a more economic spreading of the Bible and working papers for biblical animation in pastoral ministry.



- To encourage every diocese to elaborate proposals and guidelines for biblical animation in pastoral ministry.
- To promote the exchange of information and materials with the aid of modern technology and media.
- To take steps towards the unity of Christians in our common service of the Word of God.

(Report: Enrique García, fsc)

Ecuador: National Bible Week Campaign

Holding a National Bible Week (Semana Bíblica Nacional, SBN) is perhaps one of the most important activities of the Ecuadorian members of the subregion of Latin America and the Caribbean (FEBIC-LAC). National Bible Week has been observed for eleven years now and was the reason that the Ecuadorian bishops in 1995 gave biblical pastoral ministry top priority in the entire Church of Ecuador. Since then National Bible Week plays an important role in all of the dioceses. Thanks to its wide acceptance and support it has become one of those campaigns of the Church of Ecuador that have most characterized pastoral life there.

A central commission coordinates the work for National Bible Week - an arduous task! The texts, however, are elaborated by a larger committee of experts: theologians, biblical scholars, pastoral workers, as well as experts in layout, revision and printing.

Today, this campaign, together with the pertaining materials, is considered the most important platform promoting diocesan and ecumenical biblical pastoral ministry in the country. This is accomplished primarily by forming diocesan and parochial bible teams but ground has also been gained in various biblical pastoral areas where a stable foundation in biblical knowledge is offered.



holding a National Bible Week depending on their own organizational possibilities. During these five days the Bible Program Committees of the Bishops' Conference and the Centro Bíblico Verbo Divino advise and guide those who are responsible at diocesan level.

There are two documents available during National Bible Week: the *Guidelines for Assemblies* for the participants of biblical assemblies and the more substantial *Handbook for Leaders* for biblical pastoral coordinators involved. The *Handbook* is used also for biblical, theological, catechetical and pastoral formation. Every year about 80,000 copies of the *Guidelines* and 15,000 *Handbooks* are printed.

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As in the past, also this year National Bible Week will open with a five-day National Biblical Pastoral Conference. About 150 pastoral workers, male and female religious, priests and laity will take part. They will discuss the topics of the National Bible Week and evaluate and plan biblical pastoral activities in the dioceses and parishes throughout the country. Every diocese or parish determines its own date for



Text-design, editing and printing, publishing and distribution, and the national meetings with expertise and guidance are self-financed, primarily from the Bible Program funds donated by foreign institutions but also, according to the "principle of rotation", from the proceeds of the sale of materials. Moreover, every year applications requesting financial support are sent to funding agencies such as Adveniat, Church in Need or the Commission for Latin America of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops of the United States.

The first National Bible Week was held in 1993 and was dedicated to the Book of Genesis. In 2003 the tenth National Biblical Pastoral Conference and the tenth National Bible Week were held, both dedicated to the Gospel of Mark. 200 persons participated, all committed to making sure that National Bible Week 2004 will once again be celebrated in their respective dioceses.

(Report: Jaime Castillo)

ASIA / OCEANIA

India: Colloquium on Dei Verbum in Bangalore

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In preparation for the celebration of the 40th anniversary of the Dogmatic Constitution *Dei Verbum* which will be held in Rome in 2005 under the auspices of CBF together with the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, the Indian biblical scholars and pastoral workers thought it proper to prepare themselves by contributing their mite, the Indian reading of the Bible, before the mega event in Rome. Hence 95 scholars and pastoral workers came together at NBCLC, the National Biblical Catechetical and Liturgical Centre, for a three-day Colloquium on *Dei Verbum*, organized by NBCLC, from November 10 to 12, 2003.

In the opening prayer session, the dance troupe of NBCLC, Nriyavani, presented a reading from the Sacred Scriptures through music and dance. The Colloquium was inaugurated by His Eminence Cardinal Ivan Dias of Bombay with a brief and powerful message as to how we ought to pay due homage and reverence to the Holy Book, as most Indian religions do. He recalled to mind very vividly his experience of the same in Amritsar Temple where the Sikhs revere their Sacred Scripture and even call it "Guru Granth", because the words of the Guru are contained in it and so it is alive! He encouraged the efforts in the line of inculturation and Indian reading of the Bible after a careful study of the Bible and the cultural elements. On this occasion six papers were presented on:

1. *Dei Verbum*: An Opening Up of the Word of God to the Modern World (Fr. A. Mariaselvam)
2. Indian Approaches to the Interpretation of the Bible (Fr. Lucien Legrand, mep)
3. Ministry of the Word: The Challenges before the Church in India (Fr. Paddy Meagher, sj)
4. Reading the Bible by the Christians and by the People of other Faiths in the Context of the Religious Pluralism in India (Fr. Jacob Theckanath)
5. The Need of Translating the "Academic Bible" into the "Bible of the People" (Shri Shilanand Hemraj)
6. The Challenge of Fundamentalism among Catholics and in the "Sects" (Fr. Joseph Thondiparampil)

Responses were given to these six papers by Fr. S.J. Anthonysamy, Fr. Augustine Mulloor, ocd, Fr. Paschal Korothe, ocd, Fr. Dominic Veliath, sdb, Fr. Paul Savio Pudussery,



cmi, and Fr. Lucius Nereparampil, cmi. On this occasion, the Indian edition of the *New American Bible* prepared by NBCLC was also released by His Eminence, Cardinal Ivan Dias.



Besides the usual procedure of the Colloquium, the scholars had the opportunity of making use of music and dance for the purpose of acquainting themselves with the Word of God by other methods than biblical exegesis. A large collection of Scriptures of various faiths collected by Shri Shiland Hemraj, and about 60 Bibles in many of the world's languages were exhibited.

Liturgical celebrations were accompanied by lovely and well-prepared music and dances, adding flavour as well as devotion, Bhakti, to our liturgy. Towards the end of the day, Nrityavani touched the feelings and emotions of the scholars by depicting some scenes from the Bible through classical and folk dance. In this way the affective dimension of human life was abundantly catered to, and a message was conveyed to use the Indian art forms as visual theology.

Towards the end of the Colloquium, NBCLC requested the biblical scholars to revive the Catholic Biblical Association (CBA) which has been defunct for ten years, and they readily agreed. The new office bearers were elected. NBCLC and the subregional coordinator of the Catholic Biblical Federation will be ex-officio members. Hence NBCLC will be able to call upon the expertise of CBA and CBF in its efforts to bring about renewal in the Church in India. After three days of intellectual work, some scholars stayed on to participate in a Consultation on Visual and Performing Art Forms. Can we aim towards a visual theology? How far can we make use of the Indian art forms to communicate the message of the Bible in an appealing manner? Various music and dance troupes from different parts of the country participated in this endeavour – Utkalvani from Orissa, Avishkara from Kerala, Sandesha from Mangalore and Bangalore School of Music from Bangalore. Mr. Jyoti Sahi coordinated this Consultation and displayed his valuable paintings which gave depth to biblical themes through visual art forms. ■

India: Workshop on Religious Fundamentalism and Biblical Apostolate

The Fourth South Asian Workshop of the CBF took place at Sacred Heart Seminary Chennai, India, from December 1 to 3, 2003. The 42 participants from India and Sri Lanka were comprised of delegates, resource persons and special invitees.

The subregion of South Asia is a very unique one since all major religions, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam and Buddhism, play a very vital role in people's everyday lives. In this context the growth and spread of religious fundamentalism poses serious problems and challenges to our biblical apostolate. Hence this workshop took the topic "Religious Fundamentalism and Biblical Apostolate" for serious study and reflection by the delegates.

After the welcome address by Rev. Dr. A. Peter Abir, South Asian Coordinator of the CBF, Rev. Dr. Legrand, mep, the doyen of the biblical apostolate in India, gave an inspiring and powerful keynote address giving much momentum to the spirit of this workshop. There

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were talks on the socio-political analysis of the phenomenon of fundamentalism by Rev. Dr. S. M. Michael, svd, an anthropologist from Mumbai, who underlined the fact that fundamentalism refers to religious fanaticism or extremism and an unfriendly environment that does not lend itself to harmony, tranquility and sisterhood or brotherhood.

In today's world the problem of fundamentalism plagues every religion. The workshop studied the origin and nature of this malaise in Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism and Christianity. There were detailed talks on fundamentalism in each of the four religions and the question was raised as to how it affects our biblical apostolate in this region. Talks were given on the following themes:

1. Fundamentalism in Non-Christian Religions: Hinduism & Islamism (Rev. Dr. Arockiadoss, sj); Buddhism (Rev. Dr. Alexis Dassanayake).
2. Fundamentalism in Non-Mainline Churches (Rt. Rev. Dr. Devasahayam, Bishop of the Church of South India in Chennai).
3. Fundamentalism in the Catholic Church (Rev. Fr. Harry Vaz, Mumbai).



There was also a panel discussion on the challenges of fundamentalism in biblical apostolate. This panel discussion was shared by Ms. Ranjana Gertrude De Silva (Sri Lanka), Fr. Paul Puthanangady, sdb (India), and Fr. Thomas D'Sa (India). After each talk there was lively sharing and contributions by the participants. The active participation of several bishops of Tamilnadu (Archbishop Peter Fernando of Madurai, Bishop Edward Francis of Sivagangai, Chairman of the Regional Bible Commission, Bishop Devadas Ambrose Mariadoss of Thanjavur, Chairman of Catechetics and Bible for The Catholic Bishops' Conference of India) showed their keen interest in promoting biblical apostolate in a context of religious fundamentalism.

In the afternoon of the second day the participants were taken to visit the heritage of St. Thomas the Apostle: Little Mount where St. Thomas was ambushed, St. Thomas Mount where he was killed and San Thome Cathedral where he was buried were some of the important stops on this visit. The delegates also visited the Marina Beach, the second largest beach in the world. Archbishop James Arul Das, President of the Bishops' Council of this region, presided over Mass at the Cathedral on that day.

Mr. Alexander M. Schweitzer, General Secretary of the CBF, actively took part in the workshop, and his talk on the subject of fundamentalism and on the vision of the CBF inspired the delegates to continue their apostolate in the spirit of Vatican II and Dei Verbum. The delegates appreciated his presence as well as the fruitful sharing with him of their experiences in biblical apostolate in their various regions.



The Final Statement of the workshop clearly identifies the challenges of fundamentalism and indicates methodology for meeting those challenges.

Our biblical apostolate should ultimately lead us to become agents of God's reign, making the Church a sacrament of the transformed society and the catalyst for the transformation of this world. In our eagerness to respect and incorporate the growing and changing human culture, and to adopt the positive elements in the modern methods of biblical interpretation, we should not lose sight of the good and nourishing elements of the past. Otherwise nostalgia for the past may lead some to become rabid fundamentalists. Let the Word of God become a lamp for our steps and a light to our path. Let the Spirit of the Risen Lord lead us into the fullness of truth and life.

All documents and contributions to the meeting are to be published in book form soon. ☞

China: Seventh UCCBA Meeting held in Malaysia

Participants at the Seventh Meeting of the United Chinese Catholic Biblical Association (UCCBA), held from September 6 to 12, 2003 in Kuching, eastern Malaysia, resolved to promote the culture of life, serving as living witnesses of the Gospel. Under the theme of "Word and Eucharist – Source of Life", the meeting gathered 71 delegates from Hong Kong, China, Macau, Taiwan, Singapore, Malaysia, Brunei, USA and Australia.

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Archbishop Ha, a biblical scholar, highlighted in his keynote address delivered by his predecessor, Archbishop Emeritus Peter Chung, that the Word of God is the source of life because it has the power to bring into reality that which it expresses. We see this life giving power in creation, in history and in the person of Jesus Christ, the Word of God made flesh. The truth of Jesus Christ as the Word of God made flesh is made explicit in the prologue of the Gospel of John (Jn 1:1-18). Archbishop Ha concluded his paper by citing Pope John Paul II's 1995 encyclical *Evangelium Vitae* (Gospel of Life, art 79) in saying Christians have the duty to "preach the Gospel of life, to celebrate it in the Liturgy and in our whole existence, and to serve it with the various programmes and structures."

To enrich reflections and discussions on the theme, five sub-topics were addressed including "The Bible and Eucharistic Sacrament and Christian Life" (by Joseph Ang of Singapore), "How Does God's Word Deepen Our Knowledge of Eucharistic Sacrament in Mass Celebration" (by Fr. John Baptist Huang, ofm, of Taiwan), "The Role of Bible and Eucharistic Sacrament in Building Parishes and Lay Communities/Organizations" (by Mary Leung of Hong Kong and Fr. Paul Pei of China), "Bible and Prayer" (by John Leong of Macau) and "Bible and Evangelization" (by Catherine Ting of Malaysia).

The UCCBA meeting concluded with the following collective resolutions:

1. to make God's Word and Eucharistic Sacrament as the source of life for Christian communities and personal faith living, working together as witnesses of the Gospel of life and promoting the culture of life;
2. to actively promote Bible reading from the "bread of life" perspective, intensifying personal, familial and community reading of the Scriptures;
3. to exude the transforming power of the Eucharist and the Word in Christian lives;
4. to live God's Word and give witness to the truth and power of Christ, alongside the Eucharistic sacrament;
5. to promote the UCCBA Bulletin "Communion", providing information about biblical activities in different regions and biblical formation materials.



In addition, delegates from the respective area groups drew up plans to promote biblical pastoral ministry, committing to make the Bible more firmly as a central feature in building Christian communities:

- Hong Kong is to continue cooperating with Church groups in the territory such as the Bible Institute and the Focolare movement to make good use of resources and to develop the ministry in cyberspace.
- Singapore plans to organize a Bible Sunday and prepare activities in relation to next year's 48th International Eucharistic Congress.
- Malaysia is to sponsor the sale of Bibles, support the formation of Bible-study classes and train Church leaders to make Bible reading an essential part in Catholic gatherings.
- Brunei decided to form a Bible-reading group and hold a workshop. Brunei and the United States were attending a UCCBA meeting for the first time.
- Father Paul Pei, who attended from Liaoning diocese in northeastern China, said he plans to open a Bible Center to share resources and experiences. Although China is not yet a UCCBA member, it is hoped that Fr. Paul's association could sow the seed in China and help implement workable plans to spread the Word of life there.

According to Cecilia Chui, North East Asia Subregional Coordinator of CBF, more delegates attended this seventh UCCBA meeting than ever before. This encouraged Chinese Malaysian Catholics to further action, including setting up a Bible Association in the western part of the country. Ms Chui observed that while the power of the Bible is affirmed in the Church, it is somehow given less importance than the Eucharist. More work is still needed to promote and fulfil the biblical pastoral ministry.

She expressed: The Chinese biblical meeting served as a good reflection of and meaningful preparation for CBF's Asia/Oceania Biblical Congress 2005.



Japan: Translation of the Bible into Japanese

In 2002 the fascicular edition (37 volumes) of the Studium Biblicum Franciscanum's critical annotated translation of the entire Bible from the original languages was completed and the process of putting this work, spread over a period of 47 years, into one unified publication has begun, to be finally accomplished in 2007.

The first draft of the revision of the text of the individual volumes along with the abbreviation of the explanatory notes entrusted to fifteen Scripture scholars was planned to be ready within two years and is targeted for the end of May 2004. At present the manuscripts of nine of the larger volumes have already been submitted, namely: Deuteronomy, First and Second Books of Samuel, First and Second Books of the Kings, First and Second Books of Chronicles, Jeremiah and the Gospel of Matthew.

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The completion of the annotated translation of the Bible by the Studium Biblicum Franciscanum was commemorated during the Fifteenth General Meeting of the Catholic Theological Society of Japan, held at St. Anthony Seminary, Tokyo, on September 22 to 23, 2003. This meeting with the theme "The Translation and Interpretation of the Bible" was attended by over sixty participants from all parts of Japan. The former Director, Bernardin Schneider, gave a speech on the difficulties encountered during the 47 years of its making; the present Director, Fr. Takeshi Odaka, then reported on the work now in progress. Following these two presentations there was a lively question-and-answer discussion on the relation of the translation to evangelization in Japan, and on questions regarding the use of the translation in the Scripture readings of the liturgy of the Catholic Church. The contents of the presentations are scheduled to be published in the next issue of the Society's Annual.

(Report: Fr. Bernardin Schneider, ofm) □

EUROPE / MIDDLE EAST

Czech Republic: Renovated Residence of the Czech Biblical Association Opened

On October 20, 2003, the residence of the Czech Biblical Association, which underwent thorough renovations after its acquisition, was opened in a solemn ceremony at Dolany near Olomouc. Suffragan Bishop Josef Hrdlicka of Olomouc was also present at its opening and he blessed the building in the framework of a short Liturgy of the Word. In the future, the residence will serve for the holding of courses and seminars in biblical pastoral ministry, and it is also the seat of the Czech Biblical Association. It comprises, among other things, a small chapel, a large auditorium and overnight housing facilities for eighteen participants.

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At the opening celebration, the history of the establishment was recalled and acknowledgment was given to the persons and events that made possible the opening of the residence. The Director of the Czech Biblical Association, Fr. Petr Chalupa, sdb, also referred in his solemn address to the Second Vatican Council, and in particular to the Constitution on The Sacred Liturgy, which in paragraph 51 says: "The treasures of the Bible are to be opened up more lavishly so that a richer fare may be provided for the faithful at the table of God's word ..." This concern of the Council was prepared for in a decisive way through the biblical-liturgical movement. One of the founders of this movement, Fr. Pius Parsch, was born in Olomouc-Neustift, and there is a memorial slab that commemorates this in the church of Neustift. In the year 1993, the articles of association of the Czech Biblical Association were recognized by the Czech Bishops' Conference, and under its first Director, K. Flossmann, the Biblical Association became a full-fledged member of the CBF.

Fr. Chalupa reports on the present situation and on plans for the future:

"The present situation of the Czech Biblical Association is marked by beginnings in many areas. Among them one could mention, for example, the courses on biblical figures, which we learned with Elisabeth Waltersdorfer in Austria. We also offer various methodological courses on practical Bible work, for which we have translated the periodical Zugänge zur Bibel (Approaches to the Bible), by Anneliese Hecht, into Czech. For anyone interested in practical Bible work, more examples will be found on our website (www.bible-cz.org – unfortunately it exists thus far only in Czech). Finally, in conjunction



with a network of volunteer collaborators, we write texts for the broadcast *Bibel in der Liturgie* of the Christian Broadcasting Station Proglas (these are normally commentaries on the readings for the upcoming Sunday).

Our activity also includes collaboration with a number of pastoral institutes, for example, with diocesan centers for catechesis, youth, family, etc. A Bible exposition inspired by the Austrian ecumenical Bible exposition is traveling from city to city.

While the building was being renovated we were frequently asked how we are financing the work. Our first debt of gratitude is to the German Catholic Biblical Association (*Deutsches Katholisches Bibelwerk*), but we are also indebted to *Renovabis* and to numerous other benefactors. It is however not only the material connections we have that create bonds of communion with other members and supporters of the CBF, but above all the sharing of God's Word in the broadest sense of the expression.



What are our plans for the immediate future? The building,, especially the chapel, requires further furnishing; we are working on the Czech translation of the Document of the Pontifical Biblical Commission, "The Jewish People and their Holy Scripture in the Christian Bible", and finally, we would like to make an active contribution to the Congress on the occasion of the 40th anniversary of the Constitution *Dei Verbum*, which the CBF is planning to hold in Rome in 2005. For one of the main purposes of the Congress – to establish closer bonds between biblical pastoral ministry and biblical scholarship – is also a primary concern of our own." ■

Italy: Annual Reunion of the Southern and Western European Sub-region in Rome

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The Southern and Western European subregion held its annual meeting in Rome from 17 to 19 October, 2003. This first reunion since the Plenary Assembly of Beirut (2002) was moderated by Tom Osborne, who was urgently called on to perform this service due to the absence and unexpected resignation, for health reasons, of Joseph Stricher as coordinator of the subregion.

Represented at the meeting were: French-speaking Switzerland (M. Durrer); French-speaking Belgium (R. F. Poswick; M-Philippe Schüermans; H. Voisin); Catalonia (J. Magí Ferré; M.J. Argilaga Montserrat); England and Wales (A. Graffy); France (G. Billon) and Italy (G. de Virgilio), who had organized the meeting with the "Ancelle del Sacro Cuore" in Rome. Moreover, Ludger Feldkämper represented the group of Roman members of the Catholic Biblical Federation (CBF) and Ayoub Chahwan the subregion of the Middle East.



The Diocesan Service Biblique of the grand duchy of Luxembourg had sent an activities report; but there was no news from Spain, Portugal, or Malta. Delegates from Rumania had been approached, but they were unable to make it to the meeting. The Central European subregion was also unable to send a representative.

The Federation at the world level was represented by the General Secretary, Alexander M. Schweitzer, whose report contributed a number of pieces of information and triggered animated discussions, notably: a) on the way in which the subregion and its members would like to be present on the website of the Federation (an identity pass, links to the various member sites, the annual report of the members published on the web under the editorial responsibility of each member, a brief account of the annual meeting); b) on the biblical Congress organized by the CBF in Rome for 2005 in the spirit of the Constitution *Dei Verbum*; c) on the special attention to be given to African institutes connected with the biblical pastoral ministry; d) on the contribution of the subregion to a reflection on functional relations with the national Bible Societies and with the United Bible Societies (UBS); e) on the search for a new coordinator for the Southern and Western European subregion.

A considerable amount of time was devoted to the reports prepared by the different members and sent by post in advance to each. Ludger Feldkämper was encouraged to pursue the initiatives he has begun in Rome with the African students to insure that they are better informed about the CBF, and with the pontifical universities in view of the insertion of a course in biblical pastoral ministry into the "ratio studiorum". Ayoub Chahwan made a successful appeal for the solidarity of the Southern and Western European subregion with the Middle East subregion of which he is the coordinator.

Bishop Vincenzo Paglia, President of the CBF, was able to attend part of the session. He communicated his present concerns: an important moment to convey to the episcopate the demands of the CBF for a biblical animation of the entire pastoral ministry of the Church.



In this line, he discussed with the group some of the objectives, ways and means of the biblical Congress, scheduled from September 13 to 17, 2005 in Rome. A large presence of CBF members at this meeting should make it possible to exhibit the various accomplishments of the biblical apostolate in the last 40 years all over the world. It should also provide the opportunity to reflect, with the bishops from all the continents of the world, on how to implement more broadly and effectively the conciliar Constitution *Dei Verbum*, forty years after its promulgation.

With Bishop Paglia, too, the members made an evaluation of the Plenary Assembly of Lebanon. The wish was expressed to begin right now preparing with clarity the dynamics of the 2008 Plenary Assembly, making a clear distinction between the preparation of strategic objectives for the members of the CBF ("ad internum" document) and a message destined for the whole Church ("ad externum" document). Moreover, the wish that was expressed prior to the Plenary Assembly of Lebanon to develop "poles of competence" in the CBF should not be lost sight of in the years to come..

Finally, the members of the subregion gave some attention to the revenues of the subregion. (These are administered on the basis of a voluntary contribution of the members to



the subregion amounting to a supplement of 20 % of the share they send to the CBF; the revenues serve especially for the coordination and organization of the annual meeting and for gestures of solidarity). The members also gave some attention to the question of how to organize coordination, beyond the services rendered for six years by Tom Osborne and for one year by Joseph Stricher. Gérard Billon, Director of the Service Biblique Catholique in Paris, has meanwhile taken over the position of subregional coordinator.

Bible-sharing, songs and Eucharistic celebrations punctuated this fruitful annual work, in which for the first time the Maison de la Bible, a new Associate Member of the subregion, took part.

(Report: R.-F. Poswick, osb)



Cardinal Franz König Dies



As this edition was going to press, we received the sad news that Cardinal Franz König had passed away in Vienna on March 13, 2004. He was 98. Not only did Cardinal König pave the way for the ecumenical movement and forge links between the East and the West during the time of the Iron Curtain and afterwards, but his work is also inextricably linked with the Catholic Biblical Federation. He played a significant role when the Federation's foundations were being laid, and served as its first President from 1972 to 1978. Until the very end he showed great interest in the CBF's concerns and development. His memory will be held in honour now and in the future. R.I.P.

(A more detailed obituary will be published in the next issue of the Bulletin).



Bibliodrama Revisited

With reference to the last issue of the BDV (BDV 66/67) which was devoted to the theme of “bibliodrama”, the editor received a whole series of positive reactions and letters from the readers. In the following pages, we publish excerpts from three of these. These replies make clear that bibliodrama, or methods based on bibliodrama, are beginning to take on worldwide. Moreover, they show that this creative approach to the Bible is by no means limited to biblical pastoral ministry; elements of bibliodrama could make an important contribution in peace work and in the area of education as well.

Bibliodrama Comes to Angola

From November 8 to 10, 2003 I was able to offer a bibliodrama seminar in the framework of the meeting of Bible coordinators of the AFRAM-zone (Africa-Madagascar) of the Divine Word Missionaries in Luanda, Angola. The question “Who is who” was the first step and mode of entry into the personal encounter of the participants with each other and with the Word of God. Each person introduced himself, giving his name and a brief description of his life and work. The idea is that the biography of the individual participant is part and parcel of bibliodrama. As one gradually enters into the concrete stories, the personal biographies should come more and more into contact with the Word of God, so that the latter can have its healing and liberating effect on the faith-histories of the persons in question.

By way of transition, there followed a meditative tree dance from Lithuania, which was supposed to remind the individual participants of this international group of how rooted they are in their cultures and in their faith. The next step consisted in the invitation to assume their position on the path of Jesus in Judea. Places like Bethany, the Mount of Olives, the Via Dolorosa, Golgotha, Jesus’ grave, Emmaus, Jerusalem or Mount Zion, each symbolically received their place in the room and everyone together tried to recall the connection of these places with the important events in the life of Jesus. The participants were then encouraged to select the place that best corresponded with where they were on their present faith journey and to place themselves there. Finally, individual participants were questioned about where they stood, how this place spoke to them here and now and what the message was which was being communicated to them.

The following one and a half days were devoted to an active *Lectio Divina* during which the selected text, Mk 10:46-52, was interpreted and then rehearsed and played out dramatically on stage. The story of the healing of the blind Bartimaeus had an undisputable and powerful effect on the participants, because in the gradually unfolding text and by finding his own role in this story each individual was able to experience his participation in his own salvation story. The reading of the text and the hearing of the message following the different steps in the bibliodrama belong to the most important exercises of this faith experience. Only after frequent reading and listening does one achieve a deeper penetration into the connections through dynamic interaction. This leads also to a prayer that listens, and to the awakening to one’s own need of help with issues of personal growth or stunted faith.

The bibliodrama seminar in Luanda was divided into the three usual classical phases: the *warm-up phase* (the group members must break down barriers between them, come closer together and move gradually into the world of the biblical text); the *play-phase* (the text is transformed into drama on stage as the participants each select a role and seek their places, so as to enable the biblical story and the personal life-stories of the individuals to play off against each other; then the acting begins, and continues till the facilitator breaks it off), and finally the *evaluation*, or *resonance-phase* (in which questions are raised, such as: What did I experience in the group? What touched me at the level of faith? Was my own experience one that also played itself out in the space of the biblical text?) with the concluding question: what am I going to take with me into



everyday life after such an encounter with the Word of God?

On one evening at the Eucharistic celebration, instead of a homily, a “still-shot” of Rudi Pöhl and a few of the participants from the group was set up. The other group members, through a kind of *lectio* and *meditatio* based on the still-shot and the Gospel text just read, had to see if they could recognize what verse of the Gospel had been brought to expression in the still-shot.

During the individual work units the groups of participants were composed of fourteen confreres, all missionaries from a great variety of cultures. Unfortunately, neither women nor young people were present, which would have made the experience far more vibrant and natural. What I found remarkable was that in spite of this great diversity of cultures and the fact that only men (brothers and priests) with very different functions and background experiences were present, the Word of God was able to expose the deeper levels of and yearnings for spirituality and relationship with the healing Jesus. The experience also became an invaluable common source of commitment in the biblical apostolate, a

new starting-point for the preaching of the Word of God. Unfortunately, the time was all too short, limited among other things by the translation work that needed to be done. The seminar was given in English and at each step had to be translated into Portuguese or French. Often, too, we had no electricity just when we could have used it to experience the meditative dances more profoundly and more frequently.

For me, it was a very positive encounter with my confreres in Luanda who have committed themselves with great creativity and engagement to the biblical apostolate in Africa, besides the many other tasks they have also assumed. A special thank-you goes to them for their tremendous hospitality and to Fr. Joseph Kallanchira of Benin, the chief coordinator for the biblical apostolate, who made a supreme effort, in spite of significant visa difficulties, to make this seminar possible.

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Bibliodrama in Peace Work and in Further Education

In the last fifteen years of my professional life, I have been working on the formation of teachers of religion in secondary education at Catholic schools in Belgium (Flanders). I offered to all my students a training unit in techniques of bibliodrama. This was a 20 to 25 hour unit. It enabled most of them to animate a first session of bibliodrama while they were still taking their teacher-training course.

For the last ten years, I have been organizing – in conjunction with a team of specialists – a course of bibliodrama designed for catechists, men and women, who are engaged in pastoral ministry and/or movements at the parish level. This basic course, which is held at Anvers (Belgium) every year, involves two Saturdays and two complete weekends.

As president of Pax Christi of Flanders, I have the opportunity to regularly animate training courses, days of reflection and workshops of bibliodrama centered on the spirituality of non-violence, and I have done this both in Belgium and abroad. Most of the time, we dramatize the Gospel narratives in which Jesus is confronted with individual, social and religious violence in the society of

his time. In the course of international congresses, I have often animated sessions of bibliodrama with the non-believing participants on the narrative of the “prodigal son” (Luke 15), in the context of a reflection on reconciliation as the basis of peace.

We have “invented” a model of (non-therapeutic) bibliodrama that can be staged in a pastoral, didactic and cultural context. And this is very important. In fact, the great danger with poorly directed bibliodramas is that they can spark psychotic resistance among some participants and can even cause psychological regression, whether or not this is understood or intended. An animator who is well trained knows how to spot the alarming symptoms and to redirect them in a positive direction, for the well-being of the individual involved.

For me, bibliodrama is a contemporary mode of expression suitable for the theological expression and transmission of the Faith. Participants can freely select their role in the narrative and, under the cover of this role, they are able to give free expression, within the group, to their sentiments, values, hopes, disappointments, questions on the meaning of life, difficulties and joys



that are connected with faith in God. Biblical narratives have the power to place us in the presence of God and to help us enter into a personal relationship with him. After this “role-play”, the participants share what they have just experienced. No one is forced to speak; no one is allowed to ask questions. Only the stage animator can intervene, but always with great prudence, to help the participants explain their experiences in greater depth, for example by commenting on the link between the assumed role and the person in real life.

Some people complain that bibliodrama ignores the invaluable data of historical-critical exegesis. I do not agree. There are, to be sure, some groups in which work is done with the biblical narratives as though they were fairy tales or mythical legends. But I know through experience how much the knowledge of classical exegesis helps animators, together with the participants, to explore more profoundly the spiritual and theological riches of the Bible. Moreover – and this is very important – bibliodrama creates in groups that know how to use it an atmosphere of solidarity and trust which allows the participants to share their faith or to formulate their questions in a frank and open manner. Bibliodrama generates an atmosphere where faith becomes life, and life becomes faith.

In May 2003, I did a stage production of the story of “the woman caught in adultery”, with a group of about twenty collaborators of the *Pax Christi of Grands Lacs* (Burundi, Ruanda, Congo). This was in the course of a peace conference in Bukavu. It was very difficult to make an issue of the rights of women in this period marked by the conflicts of the war and of the after-war. Moreover, there were only two female participants present at this conference. This said, the bibliodrama truly opened our eyes, our psychological eyes of course, but above all the eyes of faith, to the important role of women in the process of reconciliation and forgiveness. When the “role-play” was over, the participants told of their own experiences regarding the dynamism, strength and integrity of the women in their communities, villages and parishes. And they promised to collaborate more effectively, women and men, in the work of peace and reconciliation they have taken on.

This is how the Jesus of the Gospel communicates his strength, through the medium of bibliodrama, to those who live in him.

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“Bibliodrama” with a Difference: Floating in a Gospel Scene

Prayer and meditation is like stepping into a Gospel or Bible scene and being present at it, experiencing proximity with Jesus, or any other holy or more ordinary person. Bibliodrama, as I see it, is contemplation carried out in visible fashion, in dramatized form. It puts the scene in context and allows those acting to experience it. Such an exercise in bibliodrama also trains participants to visualize scenes and enter into them when in meditation.

Following exercise offers assistance in visualizing the pericope of John’s demand for conversion (Luke 3:7-15):

1. Steps

- The group dramatizes the scene.
- When acting it out a second time, those with no active roles enter into the scene at any stage and simply float. Floating in this sense means: Joining the scene

as oneself or impersonating some contemporary character; interacting with any of the characters in the scene, tax collectors, soldiers or John the Baptist himself, or simply marking silent presence. One may pass comments, act mutely, anything one feels like. One may give a running commentary on the entire scene as it unfolds before its audience. Interaction should not last long, as that will draw the audience’s attention from the main message of the scene. Instrumental music should be playing in the background to facilitate floating.

- Repeat the exercise several times in the group, improve and add more floating each time in rehearsals and the scene will become a well prepared skit.
- When it is presented before the general audience as a skit, it provides food for thought.
- Now repeat the performance of the Gospel scene for the audience to join in and float.



2. Performance

Crowds (appear, crying out): John, baptize us, cleanse us, so that we escape the wrath of Yahweh.

Reader: John said to the crowds ...

John (appears, shouting angrily): Brood of vipers! Who warned you to fly from the retribution that is coming? But if you are repentant, produce the appropriate fruits, and do not think of telling yourselves, We have Abraham for our father because, I tell you, God can raise children for Abraham from these stones. Yes, even now the axe is laid to the roots of the trees, so that any tree which fails to produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown on the fire.

Some floaters may come and interact with those in the crowds.

Suggestions:

1. *He called us a brood of vipers! How do you feel about this?*
2. *John, I wish you would come and speak to our politicians!*
3. *John, I am a school principal. What should I do?*

Crowds: What must we do, then?

John: If anyone has two tunics he must share with the man who has none, and the one with something to eat must do the same.

Reader: Even tax collectors came to be baptized, and they asked him:

Tax Collectors: Master, what should we do?

John: Exact no more than your rate.

Soldiers: What about us? What must we do?

John: No intimidation! No extortion! Be content with your pay!

Some more floaters enter now.

Suggestions:

1. *Dissuade the crowd from following John, saying, He is mad. Let us enjoy our power and money. After all we deserve it.*
2. *Well, John, if you were well versed with our situation, you would have asked those principals to close down schools in cities and open them in villages for the benefits of the poor! Principals are the modern brood of vipers!*

3. *Someone goes round just looking at every one of the crowd and those who floated in the scene, smiling, nodding, and finally bowing to John. He could be freely acting, e.g. as Jesus.*

Reader: A feeling of expectancy had grown among the people, who were beginning to think that John might be the Christ.

Note: Later, there is reflection in groups or in the general audience on the floaters' entries. These reflections generate catechesis and often reveal deeper attitudes of the floaters.

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We would also like to hear your comments, suggestions or critique on the articles in BDV. Please send your letters to the editor at:

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We would love to know what you think!



FOR
DISCUSSION

The Book for the Future of Europe On the Growing Significance of Holy Scripture

Cardinal Carlo Maria Martini S.J.



Cardinal Carlo Maria Martini was born in 1927 and is a member of the Jesuit order. From 1979 to 2002 he was in charge of the archbishopric in Milan. Since then this biblical scholar has returned to his studies in Holy Scripture, also in the Holy Land.

The following are some excerpts from a speech by Cardinal Carlo Maria Martini to the Congress “Christianity and Democracy in the Future of Europe”, which took place in July 2002 in Camaldoli, Italy. The article was published in the journal “Il Regno” of the Heart of Jesus Fathers (Dehoniani), whose publishing house in Bologna, Italy, is an Associated Member of the Catholic Biblical Federation. The text focuses on the situation in Europe, but it contains suggestions that other countries might also do well to reflect upon.

I am delighted to be able to address this meeting of academics in Camaldoli. This study session represents one of the few places and times that afford the opportunity today to reflect in an open and unbiased way on the topic of political action in the context of Europe and of the world, and to do so with explicit reference to the Word of God.

A dream

My address will underscore one of the fundamental presuppositions for this reflection. It is connected with a “dream” I outlined already at the time of the second Synod of European Bishops: that a growing familiarity with Holy Scripture, when read and prayed by women and men of Europe – alone, in groups or in communities – might renew that “fire in the heart” experienced by the two disciples on the road to Emmaus. On the basis of my own experience I went on to say at the time that I was certain the Bible would be the book of Europe’s future, above all if it continues to be read and prayed by the youth.

Current Difficulties

By Christianity I mean here very generally all the Christian churches of Europe, ignoring for the moment the problem of ecumenism. For a number of the existential problems are in fact common to all the confessions in Europe. Among the many that exist I would like to highlight especially four.

Fragmentation and departmentalization

The first problem can be defined in terms of the fragmentation or departmentalization of life, which is occasioned by the variety of life-spheres: the place of living and studying, the place of work and that of recreation, etc. The consequences of this process are a breakup of family life and a multiplication of affiliations for each individual.

In Europe there are fewer and fewer places where a person can lead a life characterized by stable and homogeneous relations. Such a fragmentation effects a division of life that leads to signs of fatigue. People are becoming ever more nervous, more tired, more rushed; they are subject to more potent stimulations, to stronger temptations and attractions.

The collapse of relationships

Moreover, European Christians are often living their lives in relationships that are worn or in process of collapse. Europe cannot, of course, be regarded as being totally secularized. In a few regions there are vital realms and places where more or less important remnants of Christianity survive. Nevertheless, we all live in a mixture of life realms that cause a great deal of confusion and insecurity.

Subjectivism and eclecticism

To understand this third characteristic of Christianity in Europe, I would like to use the image of the tree. For one thing, you have the “sap Christians”, the so-called engaged, who identify themselves by more or less close-knit ties with the life of the community and its initiatives. Then you have the “pith Christians” who attend mass with a certain regularity, who perhaps also offer



financial support for the needs of the Church, but who are not directly engaged in the building up of the community. Then you have the “bark Christians”, who live at the margins of the Christian community. In growing numbers there are moreover also those of the first generation of Christians who have distanced themselves from the Church, so those who were brought up as Christians but with time have left the Church. And finally, those of the second generation, also in increasing numbers, who were not brought up in Christian faith at all, who never had any serious contact with the Church and who are not even baptized.

A lack of exchange among religions

A fourth problem is of more recent origin. It has to do not only with the ecumenical dialogue, which has made great advances in Europe in the last decades and is one of the factors that are contributing to a spiritual awakening of Europe and to the ability to dialogue at European and worldwide level. It relates to the presence of followers of other religions, above all Moslems, a presence that has been growing at an observable rate since just a short time ago. If we want to avoid the ghetto culture of these groups and the clash of religions and civilizations, we are faced ever more sharply with the question of our ability to live together, to dialogue with each other, to work together and to show respect for the different religions, and that of the search for common values.

Within this context, the question of the significance and the pedagogical relevance of Sacred Scripture for the future of the European continent is raised. One of the most powerful experiences that has stayed with me in the last few years is this: the Bible can be regarded with every right as the great educational book of humanity. But how can one in practice make use of this pedagogical power of the Bible and make it accessible to ordinary people, and to the great masses who inhabit our major cities, and help them to overcome the above described fragmentation of their lives, the collapse of relationships and the difficulties of intercultural and interreligious dialogue?

Lectio divina as opportunity

On the basis of my pastoral experience I would like to offer the following as an answer to these questions: the persistent, systematic and basically daily practice of lectio divina is certainly one of the possibilities that could help Christians in the world of today to experience that unity of life and that ability to acquire an orientation that would enable them to reach a socially constructive life.

By *lectio divina* I mean the ability to take up a passage of Sacred Scripture, to read it with faith accompanied by prayer, in order to expose the pitfalls of modern thought and to reach a point where we are able to penetrate all realms of truth and of life in the Spirit and according to the heart of God.

I am compelled however to insist that lectio divina does not yet take place when we simply take up a biblical text now and then, alone or in a group. Lectio divina is by its nature an ordered, methodical exercise, with a conscious goal, wherein the whole Bible, ideally in continuous readings, is read in a climate of silence and prayer.

In the West we live in a public context in which the mystery of God is practically absent from the external signs of life and society. We are threatened with an interior aridity which runs the risk of suffocating the conscience, hindering in daily experience an awareness of a taste for the Living God. Only if we continue to nourish our faith through fresh and personal contact with the Word of God will we be able to traverse the spiritual wilderness of today's society unscathed.

The presupposition: familiarity with the Scriptures

To conclude my address I would like particularly to recall how important it is for interreligious and intercultural dialogue that Christians be familiar with Sacred Scripture. The whole of Scripture is pervaded with this dialogue, for it recounts the history of the People of God, which time and again made contact with new cultures and thought currents. To some extent it adopted them and to some extent it influenced them with the gifts of clarifying distinction it brought to bear.

This attitude of dialogue and respect, which is simultaneously conscious of one's own values and certainties and which is so important, too, for a fruitful dialogue with the other religions and cultures in Europe, is therefore furthered by Sacred Scripture. On the basis of personal experiences that I have had in these years with the so-called “Cathedra”, the “Chair of Non-Believers”, I would like finally to underscore the following point, namely that the meeting and conversation with those who do not believe in God or are somehow still in search of transcendence occurs most easily on the soil of the Bible. I would insist therefore that Sacred Scripture is truly the book for the future of Europe.

(Transl.: L. Maluf)





**International Congress “The Sacred Scriptures in the Life of the Church”
on the occasion of the 40th anniversary of *Dei Verbum*
Rome, September 2005**

Place, Date, Theme

On the occasion of the 40th anniversary of *Dei Verbum*, the Catholic Biblical Federation together with the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity will organize an international congress entitled: “The Sacred Scriptures in the Life of the Church. International Congress on the occasion of the 40th anniversary of *Dei Verbum*”. The site of the event is the Domus Mariae, Rome; the dates are Tuesday, September 13 to Saturday, September 17, 2005.

General Scope

The general scope of the Congress is threefold:

1. The Celebration of 40 years of *Dei Verbum*: What has been accomplished?
2. Reading *Dei Verbum* anew in the light of the present situation of the Church and the world.
3. Providing for an ongoing implementation of *Dei Verbum*.

Target group

Besides the members of the Catholic Biblical Federation a significant number of bishops from all regions of the world will be invited and furthermore representatives of groups engaged particularly in the biblical field, representatives of other churches and church communities, etc. As of now we are expecting something on the order of 300 participants.

Program and Invitations

The program and the official invitations will be sent out by Pentecost 2004. Further information on the Congress will be included in the next issue of BDV.

Photos

Special thanks go to the following persons for their photos:

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The Catholic Biblical Federation (CBF) is a world-wide association of Catholic organizations committed to the ministry of the Word of God. At the present time, the CBF membership includes 91 full members and 227 associate members coming from a total of 126 countries.

The activities of these organizations include the preparation of Catholic and interconfessional Bible translations, the propagation of Bibles and in general the promotion of a deeper understanding of Holy Scripture.

The CBF promotes the biblical-pastoral activities of these organizations, provides a forum for the world-wide sharing of experiences in this field, searches for new ways of bringing the joy of God's Word to the faithful throughout the world. It seeks collaboration with the representatives of biblical scholarship as well as with Bible Societies of various confessions.

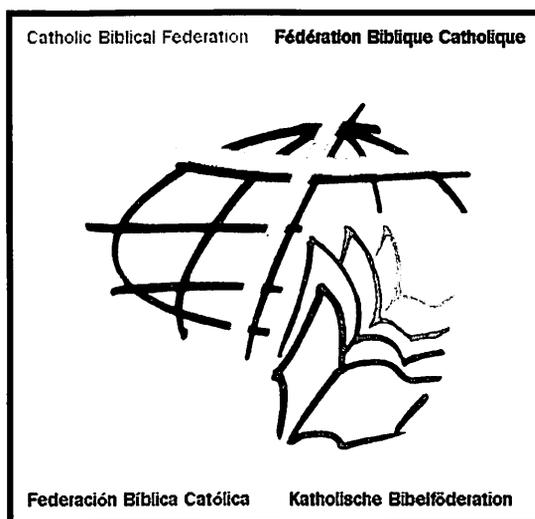
In particular, the CBF works towards the promotion of the reading of the Bible within the context of concrete life situations and the training of ministers of the Word in this direction.

At the beginning of the third millennium Holy Scripture can be viewed as the great textbook of humanity. Especially in times like this the reading of the Bible not only helps the Christian community to grow in faith and love, but it can and should also offer to the whole world those words of brotherhood and of human wisdom that it so desperately needs. This is the great challenge that the Catholic Biblical Federation sets for itself.

Vincenzo Paglia, Bishop of Terni-Narni-Amelia, Italy, President of the CBF

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