

# MINUTES

Catholic Biblical Federation  
10<sup>th</sup> Plenary Assembly  
Mar Del Plata, Argentina



PROCLAIMING  
THE WORD

Gift of Life for  
a Fragile World

(Rom 8:22-23)

## Day 5

April 19, 2023

### M01/18/04/23 OPENING REMARKS OF THE CBF GENERAL SECRETARY, FR. JAN STEFANÓW (SG)

#### 1.1 Reports from the Region and Sub-region Meetings

Sub-regional reports should be submitted to the general secretariat before the assembly concludes.

#### 1.2 A Message from the Pontifical Biblical Commission

The Secretary of the Pontifical Biblical Commission, Prof. Nuria Calduch Benages, sent a message for the Assembly, which the SG read. The text of the message is as follows:

*The Members of the Pontifical Biblical Commission, gathered at the Casa Santa Marta in the Vatican this week, would like to send cordial good wishes to the participants of the Tenth General Assembly of the Catholic Biblical Federation, meeting in Mar del Plata (Argentina) at the same time. Your discussion on 'the Word of God, gift of life in a fragile world' echoes the topic proposed to us by the Holy Father, 'suffering and sickness in the Bible'. Let us be united in a common endeavour to promote the Word of God for the health and healing of God's world.*

#### 1.3 Minutes of the Plenary Assembly

The SG reminded the delegates that the Assembly minutes from each day are available online. All corrections and amendments should be reported to the assembly's general secretary before the conclusion of the Assembly.

#### 1.4 Cultural Night

This evening's schedule will be changed. After the final session, Eucharist will be followed by a cultural night and a shared meal in the common room.

#### 1.5 Today's Afternoon Sessions

After the workshop session, the delegates will be divided into working groups to share ideas and experiences. After group work, meetings in the subregions will be held to formulate proposals for the Assembly's final statement. These must be sent to the secretariat before the evening Eucharist on April 20.

This will be followed by explaining the Catholic Biblical Federation's administrative and government structure.

### **M02/18/04/23 OPENING REMARKS OF THE DAY'S MODERATOR, PROF. ERNESTO BORGHI**

The Moderator introduced the day by stating that we would listen and interact with the presentations and speakers of the day. Today we will be listening to the word of God as the word of life and focusing on life. The Moderator introduced the topics of the three presentations of today and guided the participants to this how the insights from the presentations could be an opportunity for all in the world and how we can articulate these insights in context, discerning the relationship between life and the word.

The Moderator then introduced the first speaker of the day, Mons. Ciro Quispe López.

### **M03/18/04/23 CONFERENCE OF BISHOP CIRO QUISPE LÓPEZ**

Bishop Ciro Quispe López was born in Cuzco, Peru, on October 20, 1973. He received his education from San Antonio Abad Seminary, Regina Apostolorum Athenaeum, and Angelicum University. In 2001, he was ordained as a priest. He furthered his studies at Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome, where he obtained a license in Biblical Theology and a Doctorate in Biblical Studies. In 2018, he was appointed bishop of the Prelature of Juli in Peru.

He presented the paper titled "El El Misterio de la Palabra" which was a systematic exposition focused on the profound dynamic embedded in the concept of "Logos" and in the dialogue and interaction between Jesus and Peter in the second post-resurrection encounter at the shores of Lake Galilee narrated in John ch. 21.

The Moderator responded to the presentation by referring to the strength of the word and how it is a source of life that touches human existence. In Exodus 3, the name of God emphasizes His constant presence in the lives of humanity. Since we know that words can be used destructively, we can reflect on when and where our words have been a gift of life for others.

A Q&A and sharing session focused on exchanging ideas and thoughts about the life-giving aspect of the word. Participants questioned how the word's life-giving nature could be translated into transformative power in human fragility, silence, and brokenness.

One of the delegates shared how the word "Logos" was translated into Chinese by Gabriel Allegra, an Italian Franciscan missionary. In Chinese, a pictorial language that uses pictorial characters rather than letters, the character the translator used conveys a sense of uniqueness, nobility, and beauty. Furthermore, the character appealed not to a common word but to a poetic and beautiful one. This character also serves as the root of many other characters that derive from it and express life, giving the idea that logos gives birth to other words. Finally, another aspect of the character used is that it contains an element of mouth, referring to the creation of humanity and breathing life into humanity.

The speaker thanked everyone for their appreciation and responses. He stated that the actions of the Gospel should influence the way we live our lives, but we must also go beyond mere actions and practice what we preach. The words of God have the power to divinize us, as they bring life from death, and experiencing the divine through the power of the word stays with us forever.

#### **M04/18/04/23 CONFERENCE OF PROF. NINA HEEREMAN**

Prof Nina Heereman is an Associate Professor and Chair of the Department of Sacred Scripture at St. Patrick's Seminary and University in Menlo Park, California. She obtained an STB from the Pontifical Gregorian University, an SSL from the Pontifical Biblical Institute, an SSD from the École biblique et archéologique française de Jérusalem, and a doctorate from the University of Fribourg. She has given lectures as a visiting professor at the Collège des Bernardins in Paris, the Pontifical Biblical Institute in Rome, and the Dominican School of Philosophy in Berkeley, California. She is the author of numerous works, including *Behold King Solomon on the Day of His Wedding*, Leuven, Peeters, 2021. Her scholarly interests include integrating exegesis with systematic and spiritual theology.

Prof. Heereman presented the paper titled "Sacred Scripture and the Formation of those Preparing for the Priesthood and Studying in Academic Theological and Religious Institutions: Priorities and Essential Contents." The presentation delivered via the Internet in English was an in-depth reflection on the role of the Scriptures in the formation of clergy and church leaders, which the speaker assessed as needing a rethink and reform. She stated that her teaching and life experience clearly shows that a significant part of the clergy does not really know the Bible sufficiently and adequately. She provided some valuable insights and suggestions for addressing this worrying lacuna.

The moderator responded that the presentations and sharing of the past two days highlighted the point raised by the speaker, namely the need for reform and reshaping the methodology of the Old Testament studies and the role of that part of the Bible in the pastoral ministry as well and in the Catholic Biblical Scholarship. The second issue was that of a holistic approach to theological studies that needs to consider the relationship between scripture and pastoral training.

#### **M05/18/04/23 CONFERENCE OF BISHOP PABLO VIRGILIO DAVID**

Bishop Pablo Virgilio David was born in Betis, in the municipality of Guagua, Philippines, on March 2, 1959. He attended secondary school at the minor seminary Mother of God. He studied philosophy at the Ateneo de Manila University in Quezon City and theology at the Loyola School of Theology of the same university. He was ordained a priest on March 12, 1983. In 1986, he was sent abroad for studies. He obtained a licentiate and then a doctorate in sacred theology from the Catholic University of Leuven and a diploma from the École biblique et archéologique française in Jerusalem.

On May 27, 2006, he was appointed auxiliary bishop of San Fernando and titular bishop of Guardialfiera. On October 14, 2015, Pope Francis appointed him the bishop of Kalookan. On July 8, 2021, he was elected president of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines. He is known for being a critic of human rights violations committed in the context of the drug war promoted by President Rodrigo Duterte. He is the author of several publications on Sacred Scripture, both academic and popular, and is considered one of the country's leading experts in biblical studies.

Despite being present at the Assembly, the speaker delivered his presentation via a pre-recorded video talk for clarity and time management. The title of his paper is "Las escrituras bíblicas y la pastoral de diócesis, vicarías y parroquias: lo esencial del presente al futuro" and is available in the documentation of the Assembly in Spanish, while the presentation broadcasted was delivered in English.

The Bishop started the presentation by introducing himself and stating that his focus would be pastoral. He noted that the biblical apostolate is usually considered just one of the various ministries

in the Church. This constitutes a problem because it places biblical pastoral ministry as one of the many ministries or apostolates concerned with education and the transmission of knowledge.

Moderator responded to the two talks by emphasizing the need to “put the Bible in the hands of the people,” both in the literal sense of making it available and understood.

Prof. Hermann responded with reference to Amos 8:11, which speaks about the human hunger for hearing the word of the Lord. Furthermore, in the Song of Songs, the bride is called by a Hebrew expression unique to the book, which calls the bride the shepherdess (a contended but legitimate view) who pastures the people along with God, according to her special vocation. Thus, the Church and God are both shepherds of the people.

The Q&A and sharing session conveyed the appreciation for the speakers and the honesty with which they expressed the concerns and issues connected with the priestly formation and the Church structures.

The points highlighted and raised were: the need for convergence between the Scripture, systematic theology, and spirituality; the role of women in pastoral and biblical ministry given the male-dominated Church; the concern with the approach to the Old Testament studies and even the terminology of “Old Testament,” which excludes and relegates the Jewish people to a subservient and secondary role; and the necessity to put the Bible in the hands of the people through the biblical formation and education.

Perhaps the session’s most striking statement was made by Bishop Pablo Virgilio David, who commented extensively on the character of pastoral ministry in the Catholic Church and offered a very insightful critique of how it is exercised and conducted. **He stated: “Ministry should not be about serving the Church! We should invite the people to be a part of the serving Church!”**

## **M06/18/04/23 WORKSHOPS**

The first part of this afternoon session was reserved for thematic workshops that showcased various projects and activities of biblical nature. Four workshops took place:

- ABP en Brasil
- The royal priesthood of all the people (Ex 19:1-8a), a model for inclusive ministry
- Urban biblical training Taller 6 (ES): Children's PBA
- Children's PBA

Reports from each workshop are available in the documentation of the Assembly.

## **M07/18/04/23 REGIONAL MEETINGS IN PREPARATION FOR THE COMPOSITION OF THE FINAL STATEMENT OF THE 10<sup>TH</sup> PLEINARY ASSEMBLY**

At 5.10 p.m., the SG convoked the second session of the afternoon. He informed the assembly that the last formal declaration made by the Plenary Assembly was created and published during the Plenary Assembly in Lebanon in 2002, twenty years ago. Therefore, updating and refining the vision and mission of the CBF is necessary. As a result, the current assembly will create a final statement reflecting the delegates' thoughts, ideas, hopes, and aspirations. To facilitate this process, an initial group discussion was held to share personal experiences, followed by meetings at regional and sub-regional

levels to formulate statements and ideas that will be included in the final statement. The groups' written statements are expected to reach the general secretariat by the evening of April 19.

### **M08/18/04/23 PRESENTATION ON THE CBF STRUCTURE AND GOVERNANCE**

After the Assembly resumed in the main venue, the Secretary-General explained the structure and governance arrangements of the CBF and clarified the election process. In accordance with a decision made during the 2015 Assembly, delegates were asked to propose candidates for the Executive Committee to streamline the election process. These candidates must be submitted to the General Secretariat by Thursday, April 20th at 8 a.m. It was clarified that members of the Executive Committee represent institutions that delegate a representative to the Committee. Therefore, voting is carried out not for individuals but for member institutions: seven full members and three associate members.

The day ended with the Eucharist celebration led by the Oceania Region starting at 7.15 p.m., followed by the cultural evening combined with supper.