

FINAL MESSAGE

At the end of the IX Plenary Assembly of the Catholic Biblical Federation (CBF), the participants from 63 countries, are pleased to share with the whole Church our sincere attitude of gratitude to Our Heavenly Father, in Christ, the Word of Life, for granting us the experience of new initiatives for the mission entrusted us by the Church.

Inauguration of the Assembly

The Assembly was held at the Ad Gentes Centre Nemi (Italy) during the days 18-23 June 2015. Its opening coincided with the publication of the Encyclical *Laudato Si*, whose foundation is the Word of God.

In the first working session, the unanimous approval of reforms to the Constitution underlined for the entire Assembly the renewal and sound foundations of the CBF.

Papal Audience

On June 19 we were received by Pope Francis at a Special Audience and with his characteristic warmth, he responded spontaneously and affectionately to the greeting of the new President of the CBF, Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle. He illustrated for us movingly the path of martyrdom which the Church must undergo as it “*goes forth*”, in the spirit of humility of the apostle Paul who, far from taking pride for what he had suffered in proclaiming the Gospel, confessed that “ *he boasted only of his own weakness.*”

"I prefer, a Church bruised in accidents rather than a Church sick from being shut in on itself," the Pope told us; and then he added: “ *The Word of God is not something that makes life easy, it always put us into difficulties*". “*One of the things that worries me a lot,*” he also said, “ *is the perfunctory proclamation of the Word of God in the homily. Do everything possible to help deacons, priests and bishops to truly deliver the Word of God in the homily. It is a sacramental. Speeches are not sacramentals.* ”

Contents

In the following days, Professors Nuria Calduch-Benages (Italy) and Maricel Mena López (Colombia) honoured us with incisive presentations that helped focus the Assembly on its theme: **The Word of God, source of evangelization.**

The address of Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle offered us a challenging guiding light on the direction the CBF is invited to take in the next six years. The Cardinal invited us to: - Develop a biblical vision of nature and the earth as God's creation, - Propose biblical pastoral programmes that help make sense of the situations of suffering and injustice, - Contribute to the celebration of the Holy Year of Mercy through the

development of biblical inputs - Stimulate a moral perspective inspired by biblical wisdom to help the search for an economy for the common good that excludes no one, - Offer reflections on family issues and their problems - Encourage youth ministry imbued with biblical spirituality for today's digital culture - Inspire popular piety with the Bible and Catechesis, - Provide biblical reflection on the theme of the city, to help find ways of evangelization in urban centres, - Contribute from the Bible to the evangelization of cultures so as to respect sensitivities and cultural values - Provide a biblical spirituality that helps to sustain the hope of persecuted Christians.

Celebrations

During the days of the Assembly we experienced the presence of the Holy Spirit and his influence on creation of an atmosphere of conviviality, brotherhood and prayer that filled us with joy and inspired us to strengthen CBF organization as well as the Biblical Animation of all Pastoral Life (ABP) in our regions, sub-regions and individual Churches.

In a festive religious atmosphere we commemorated the 50th anniversary of the promulgation of the Dogmatic Constitution "*Dei Verbum*" of Vatican II. This Conciliar document changed the vision of Scripture which until then had prevailed in the Church. The most radical change was a new paradigm in the understanding of Divine Revelation, understood not as the mere communication of truths, but as a dialogue of friendship between God and humanity. This fundamental change revolutionized Catholic theology and pastoral life. The Council teaches:

<< In Sacred Scripture, the Father who is in heaven comes lovingly to meet his children and talks with them >> (No. 21). << In this revelation, the invisible God (Col. 1:15; 1 Tim 1:17), moved by love, speaks to humans as friends (Ex 33:11; Jn 15:14-15) and lives among them (Bar 3:33) so that He may invite and take them into fellowship with Himself >> (No. 2)

From the heart of this Constitution was born Biblical Pastoral Life, considered today, not a pastoral ministry " *alongside other forms of pastoral life, but as Biblical Animation of all Pastoral life* (Verbum Domini 73-75; 90-95; cf. Concluding Document Aparecida No. 248).

The Catholic Biblical Federation (CBF) also had its origins in this same Constitution: On 16 April, 1969, Blessed Pope Paul VI established it in order to implement "*Dei Verbum*", and especially Chapter VI on "*Sacred Scripture in the life of the Church.*"

Conclusion

With trust in God, the Merciful Father (2 Cor 1:3), we assume as Biblical Federation the challenges of *a new chapter in evangelization (EG 1)* in the context of a new era characterized by the immense wonders that humanity is discovering in God's creation, but where there is also present social exclusion, widespread violence, especially violence against women and children, the power of technology that paradoxically links us but also makes us more individualistic, the *feverish pursuit of frivolous pleasures*, terrorism and fratricidal wars, mixed with religious elements, particularly in the Middle East.

In an act of solidarity with the sisters and brothers of the Churches of Nepal, following the recent earthquake that hit the country, a collection was taken up in the Christian tradition.

We invite all pastoral workers to serve as interpreters to all of the Word of God, previously *listened to, meditated upon, lived, celebrated and witnessed to (EG 174)*.