

"We proclaim to you what we have seen" (1 John 1:3)

by Ernesto Borghi

Bonsoir! Good evening! Buenas tardes! Good evening!

I am Ernesto Borghi, coordinator of the Southern and Western Europe area of the Catholic Biblical Federation. With my colleague Eduard Patrascu, coordinator of the Central and Eastern Europe area of this same world institution, I welcome all of you most cordially to this existential biblical culture meeting offered for the listening of those who are and will be connected in Europe and anywhere else in the world.

Why "existential meeting?" Because we will once again talk about the Bible and human life, human life and the Bible. We are at the beginning of the annual week of prayer and reflection toward Christian unity. In the heart of this happy time for a meaningful deepening of ecumenical focus, which must be a qualifying element in the life of every person who seeks to be a Christian, we will celebrate the Fourth Edition of the Word of God Sunday.

In the introduction to the liturgical-pastoral guide for this occasion Msgr. Rino Fisichella writes: "Proclaiming what has been seen and heard, therefore, causes the believer to forget his labors, because the commitment of faith imposes the "rush" to every person who, like the Ethiopian, has the Holy Scripture in his hand but does not understand its meaning" (cf. Acts 8:26-40). The proclamation of God's Word, as we see, requires the direct involvement of every believer. It is necessary for each one to be attentive and vigilant to understand the "manifestation" of this Word, because the meaning of one's life is at stake."

This awareness implies a fact that is both difficult and exciting at the same time: effectively listening to the Word of God contained in the Scriptures means translating into the concreteness of daily life the invitation to love others in the image and likeness of how the God of Jesus Christ loved every human being. We say this with particular reference to the age in which we live, marked by great tensions, violence, wars, geographically near and far, and social, economic and cultural uncertainties about the lives of human beings and nature as a whole from one end of our Planet to the other.

In spite of all this, those who have experienced the generous and determined love of someone in their own lives and have done the same for others (and they are still, we believe, the majority of humanity), may wonder what the roots of this love are, but even more how they can spread it to women and men who are their contemporaries, in a logic of gratitude for the good received and responsibility about the importance of its spread.

The Catholic Bible Federation intends to propose, this evening, even more than in the previous three years, some reflections, from the biblical text to everyday life. The goal of our Federation, which has hundreds of members scattered all over the world, is, according to an openness of mind and heart that wants to be truly fraternally international, to foster a biblical grounding of the normal pastoral action of the Catholic Church and to collaborate with anyone who wishes to make the biblical Scriptures and the Word of God contained therein an essential point of reference for their lives.

The Gospel text that will be proclaimed in the Eucharistic celebrations of this Fourth Sunday of the Word of God will be a well-known passage from the Gospel according to Matthew, vv. 12-23 of chapter 4. Let us propose a first reading from it, in the four languages in which we will express ourselves this evening, from Italian to the others (**Traductions of Text**)

In this passage, on the threshold of the first major discourse of Jesus of Nazareth in the Matthean gospel, v. 23, which we have highlighted in the text of the four translations just shown, summarizes, in a particularly intense and effective way, what the existence of Jesus of Nazareth on the streets of first-century CE Palestine consists of: three phrases, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the Kingdom, healing all sorts of sickness and infirmities in the people express the concreteness of this wide-ranging active and vitalizing presence.

The key part of this monster meeting is entrusted to three friends and colleagues, well-known experts in biblical exegesis and hermeneutics, namely Englishman Adrian Graffy, Romanian Eduard Patrascu and Catalan Esperança Amill Rocamora. They will offer some reflections, each on one of these phrases, starting from the text itself and broadening the discourse into the Bible and contemporary life.

Adrian Graffy, a member of the Pontifical Biblical Commission, will speak in English. Eduard Patrascu, professor of New Testament at the Institute of Catholic Theology in Iasi and translator of the Bible into Romanian, will speak in Italian. Esperança Rocamora, professor of biblical subjects at the Higher Institute of Religious Sciences in Tarragona and vice-president of the Bible Association of Catalonia, will speak in Spanish. All of you will be able to download the texts of their interventions as well as mine in three other languages, whichever you like best.

At the end of their analyses and interpretations, I will offer some summary remarks and some questions that will foster the relationship between this Gospel verse and the daily life of each and every one of those who are watching this broadcast and who will be able to see it or review it on a delayed basis in the coming days.