

Good evening to everyone who is seeing and hearing us!

I am Adrian Graffy, English priest and member of Pontifical Biblical Commission. I am delighted to present this very special event : an international meeting, broadcast on live streaming throughout Europe and beyond, to help us prepare for the second "Sunday of the Word of God" on 24 January. Pope Francis established this Sunday at the end of 2019 and it was celebrated for the first time in January 2020 (*Aperuit illis*, 3).

It falls every year on the third (ordinary) Sunday of the year. Pope Francis made the connection with the week of prayer for Christian unity, which takes place between 18 and 25 January each year, and with the Memorial Day of the Shoah, next 27 January. The Pope writes in the document *Aperuit illis*: "this Sunday has an ecumenical value, since the Scriptures indicate to the listener the way to an authentic and solid unity" (3) Clearly a Sunday dedicated to the Scriptures will also deepen our understanding of our faith.

This meeting is organized by two of the European areas of the Catholic Biblical Federation. We thank Fr Jan Stefanow, general secretary of CBF and technical director of this meeting, together with the coordinators of the Southern and Western sub-region and the Central and Eastern sub-region of Europe, who have brought about this first combined initiative in the Catholic Biblical Federation.

The evening is entitled "The prophecy of the Gospel for the life of all". In fact we are thinking of the new beginnings inspired by the Word of God to every woman and every man to help us change our lives for the better and for the good of others. Eventually Jonah goes to preach in Nineveh and the people embrace a new beginning and a new way of life (Jonah chapter 3). The same is true for Jesus' disciples as we begin to read the Gospel according to Mark (Mark chapter 1). Those who speak this evening will consider those two readings that will be proclaimed in the Catholic Church next Sunday, from the book of Jonah and from the Gospel according to Mark. English, Italian and French will be the languages of this evening and there will also be some Spanish: we want as many people as possible to feel included and welcome

at our meeting. The Catholic Biblical Federation is for all countries, serving the cause of biblical evangelisation throughout the Church.

For each of the two readings we will listen to a brief comment of an exegetical nature and one of interpretation for our life today. In fact, we believe that for every biblical text we must always have two successive approaches, one to the text itself, another to its value for our daily life today.

The Second Sunday of the Word of God falls in the midst of the world pandemic. Reconnecting with the Scriptures and their radically existential value is of paramount importance at this time. The Word of God contained in the Bible is the beginning of every journey of faith for Christians, and this year we enter a new time with renewed faith, courage and imagination from the living and life-giving Word of God. A warm welcome to this event and thanks for being with us! Let us now begin the programme of our meeting.

Dealing with the passage taken from the book of Jonah



**Djurica Pardon**, Croatian, priest, professor of integral ecology at the University of Zagreb



**Stefania De Vito**, Italian, married and mother of two children, professor of Sacred Scripture at the LUMSA University of Rome

Dealing with the passage taken from the Gospel according to Mark



**Eduard Patrascu**, Romanian, priest, coordinator of the Central and Eastern European Sub-Region of the Catholic Biblical Federation



**Séamus O'Connell**, Irish, priest, professor of Holy Scripture at St Patrick's College in Maynooth