



The Holy See

MESSAGE OF JOHN PAUL II TO THE MEMBERS OF THE CATHOLIC BIBLICAL FEDERATION

*To the Most Reverend Wilhelm Egger
President Catholic Biblical Federation*

In the love of the Lord Jesus, I greet the members of the Executive Committee, the Administrative Board and the Sub-Regional Coordinators of the Catholic Biblical Federation as you gather in Rome to celebrate the 30th anniversary of the Federation. This is an opportunity to thank God for all that the Federation has done to implement the vision of the Second Vatican Council that "easy access to Sacred Scripture be provided for all the faithful" (*Dei Verbum*, n. 22).

Indeed, one of the many fruits of the Council has been a growth in knowledge and love of the Bible among Catholic people, bringing with it a deeper sense of the divine presence in their lives. It is my fervent hope that you and your colleagues will continue to do all you can to ensure that the inexhaustible riches of God's word are made ever more available to Christ's faithful, that they may be better prepared for the challenges that engage their faith.

Receiving the founding members of the Federation 30 years ago, Pope Paul VI made clear that the Bishops have the prime responsibility to help the faithful achieve a sound understanding of the Scriptures. He stressed how good and necessary it is that bodies such as yours come forward to help the Bishops in this task. What my revered Predecessor said then is no less true now.

Without a sound understanding of Scripture, there will not be that fullness of Christian prayer which begins with the experience of listening to God's word. Nor will there be that powerful Christian preaching which rises from the experience of hearing God's word and opens the ear of the faithful to hear what the preacher himself has heard first. Nor will there be a Christian theology which speaks the great truth of God's word rather than the uncertainties of human opinion. In helping the Bishops to teach the way of truly biblical prayer, preaching and theology, the Federation stands not on the margins of the Church's pastoral life but at its very heart; and that is a reason for great gratitude.

I also encourage you to continue to foster the ecumenical dialogue which follows when Scripture is studied and shared by

people of different religious allegiances. It is vital now for all Christians to explore more deeply the shared resource of the Bible in the search for the unity which the Lord clearly wills and the world so urgently needs if it is to believe.

Entrusting you to Mary, Mother of the Word made flesh, and invoking upon the Federation a fresh outpouring of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, who breathes through the sacred text, I cordially impart my Apostolic Blessing.

From the Vatican, 1 May 1999.

JOHN PAUL II

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