



Information about the Catholic Biblical Federation

The Catholic Biblical Federation (CBF) is a Catholic world fellowship of international and local organizations committed to the biblical-pastoral ministry, created to carry out the recommendations of the II Vatican Council concerning the Bible.

The Federation's aim is to be of service to the Bishops in the fulfillment of their responsibility to proclaim the Word of God to all the faithful. Any Catholic organization engaged in the biblical-pastoral ministry and enjoying ecclesiastical recognition is eligible for membership.

The CBF has been established by the Holy See as a public association of Christ's faithful. As such it is *ipso iure* a juridical person in the Church and is governed by the provision of the Codes of Canon Law on public associations (CIC 298-326, CCEO 573-583). The Federation relates to the Holy See through the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity.

Today, the CBF is represented in 127 countries by 319 members.

① History

The CBF was created to carry out the recommendations of the Second Vatican Council concerning the Bible, particularly with respect to the *Dei Verbum*, where it is said that "easy access to Sacred Scripture should be provided for all the Christian faithful" (*Dei Verbum*, 22).

The idea of such an organization for promoting the Catholic biblical apostolate was already proposed in **1950** by the Austrian liturgist and biblical scholar Pius Parsch. In October **1964**, during the third session of the Second Vatican Council, a request for an organization of this kind was again made by Bishop Emile Cekada of Skopje.

The idea was then brought to realization by Cardinal Bea, who in **1968** called together for consultation in Rome the existing directors of Catholic biblical pastoral organizations. Finally, on **16th April 1969**, the Federation was founded by Cardinal Willebrands, president of the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity.

Till today the CBF remains affiliated with the now called "Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity" and it is *the* institution for the biblical pastoral ministry within the Catholic Church.

First called "World Catholic Federation for the Biblical Apostolate", its name was simplified to "Catholic Biblical Federation" in 1990.

② Structure

Members

The Federation has two categories of members:

(1) *Full Members* are those Catholic organizations which have applied for membership and which are entrusted by the local Bishops' Conference with an official mandate for the biblical pastoral ministry. Each country may be represented by only one Full Member.

(2) *Associate Members* are any other Catholic organizations engaged in the biblical pastoral ministry in any of its many forms. These organizations are admitted to membership by the Executive Committee.

Today the Federation is represented by 319 members in 127 countries of the world. These members are engaged in the most varied realms of biblical pastoral ministry.

President

The President is the presiding officer of the Federation. He is a prelate, elected by the Executive Committee and presented to the Holy See for confirmation. The President's term of office is six years, renewable.

➤ President (since 2002): Msgr. Vincenzo Paglia, Bishop of Terni-Narni-Amelia, Italy

Plenary Assembly

Every six years, delegates of the members meet for a Plenary Assembly to define the policy of the Federation and give directives for the succeeding years.

1972	Vienna, Austria	"Bible and Liturgy"
1978	Malta	"Biblical Spirituality"
1984	Bangalore, India	"God's Prophetic People: 'Would that all were prophets' (Num 11,29)"
1990	Bogotá, Colombia	"The Bible in the New Evangelization: 'Behold, I make all things new' (Is 43,19; Rev 21,5)"
1996	Hong Kong	"Word of God - Source of Life: 'The Word was made flesh... that they may have life in all its fullness' (Jn 1,14; 10,10)"
2002	Beirut, Lebanon	"Word of God - A Blessing for all Nations: 'You show me the ways of life' (Acts 2,28; Ps 16,11)"

Executive Committee

An Executive Committee, elected at the Plenary Assembly, meets at least once every two years and monitors the implementation of the resolutions of the Plenary Assembly.

General Secretariat

The General Secretariat consists of a small international team which coordinates the work of the Federation and acts on the directives of the Plenary Assembly and the Executive Committee.

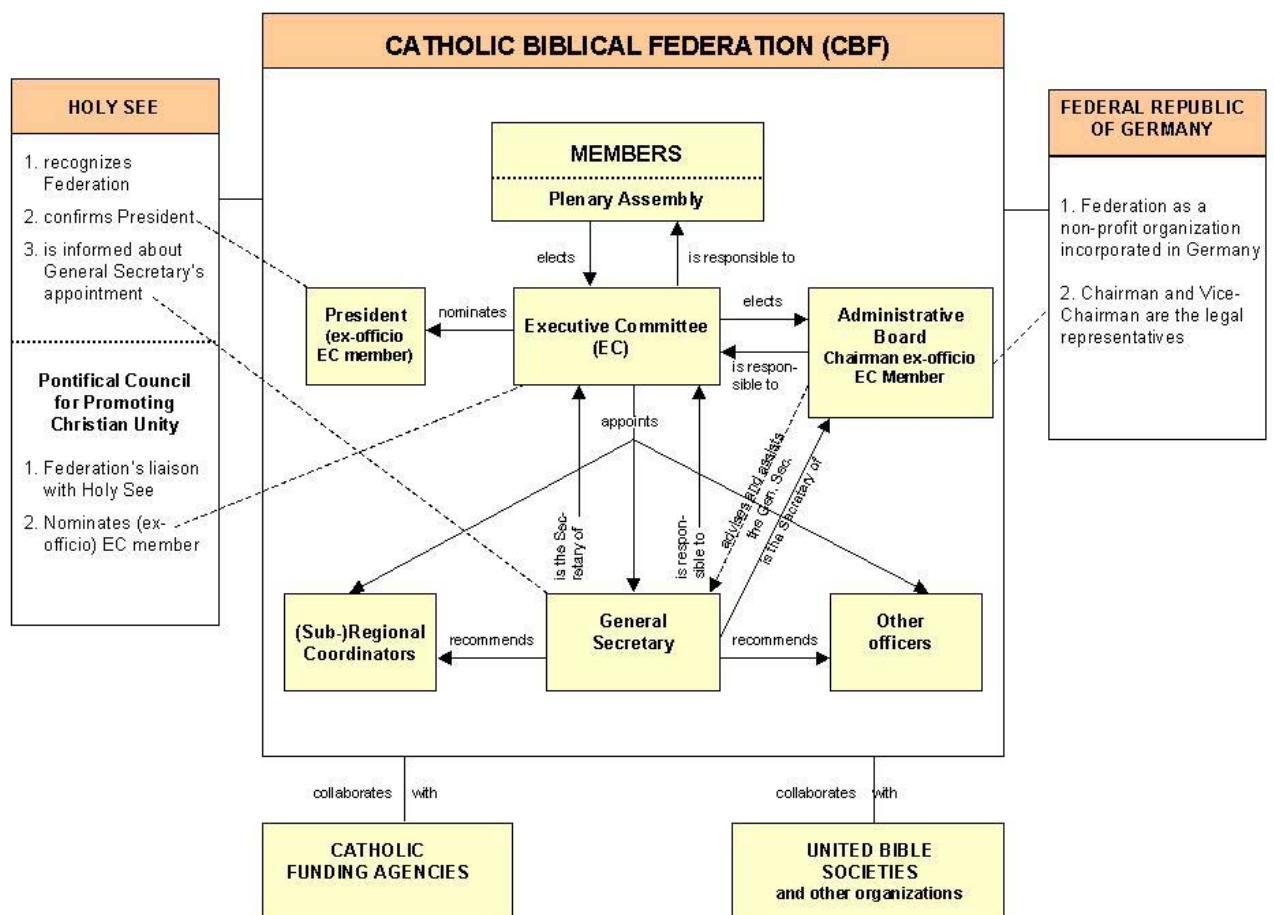
➤ General Secretary (since 2002): Dipl.-Theol. Alexander M. Schweitzer

Main areas of the General Secretariat's service are contacts with the members, promotion of "networking" and cooperation, contacts with organizations whose objectives are related to CBF's (Unite Bible Societies, etc.) and exchange of information important for the promotion of biblical pastoral ministry – which takes place also through different publications (as the quarterly "Bulletin Dei Verbum", published in English, French, Spanish and German), internet and e-mail.

Regions / Coordinators

Based on the principle of subsidiarity the CBF is divided into four regions: Africa, the Americas, Asia-Oceania and Europe-Middle East.

Most of these regions are further subdivided into subregions. The Regional and Subregional Coordinators' endeavor to promote the biblical pastoral ministry in their respective sub/regions.



③ Activities and priorities

In general

In the course of the years following the Second Vatican Council a number of new approaches to the Bible developed, both in the exegetical area and in that of the biblical pastoral ministry. A real explosion took place in Catholic Bible production.

Alongside the existing Bible translations, new translations, often produced in collaboration with the Bible Societies, were and are being produced in a great variety of countries. Pastorally oriented commentaries on the Bible were written. Materials and study aids for biblical pastoral ministry started to be produced, as did Bible correspondence courses and activities at the grass-roots level. New approaches to the Bible, such as bibliodrama, for example, were developed; and new life was breathed into old proven methods such as *lectio divina*. The training of clerics and lay catechists – the formation of the formators – was thoroughly revisited in the light of the newly discovered central role of Scripture that took

place since *Dei Verbum*. The advantages of the “newer” media and means of communication such as the computer, the Internet, and e-mail were also increasingly seen as a useful resource for the biblical pastoral ministry. All these areas are the fields where the member organizations of the CBF are engaged.

Ongoing efforts should be made to ensure that the Bible is translated into the various languages that different people speak. Hence, one important task of the CBF is to promote the translation, production and distribution of the Bible.

As important as this, however, is the concern to provide assistance in the field of translating the Bible into the various cultural, societal and life-contexts. Hence, the CBF supports the production of biblical pastoral material, is engaged in the field of formation, organizes the exchange of experience and resources on various levels and takes concrete measures to bridge the gap between an academic-scientific and a more life-related, pastoral approach to the Bible. As a local as well as worldwide network the CBF is committed to making the biblical pastoral work – which is basically performed at grass-root level – more fruitful and effective.

The *Bulletin Dei Verbum* is one of its tools to animate this biblical pastoral network; on regional and local level there exist further publications. The possibilities made available by the Internet, too, play an ever more important role in this field.

Particular efforts must be made in the immediate future to counter the dangers of fundamentalism. Fundamentalism could be called a “natural enemy” of a meaningful approach to the Bible and hence of biblical pastoral ministry. For its world view is characterized not by openness, pluralism and dialogue, but rather by fear, intolerance and violence. It will be CBF’s task to bring out the contrast between these fearful attitudes and the life-affirming possibilities opened up by the Word of God.

In particular

Some specific priorities of the Federation’s work for the next years as defined by the Plenary Assembly 2002:

- Promotion of a greater awareness of the importance of the Bible in the life of the Church in general and among Bishops and ecclesiastical institutions in particular.
- Development of biblical formation programs for people at all levels of the Church and society at large, and in particular for the poor.
- Making available and accessible appropriate, pastoral and affordable translations of the Bible, taking into account the cultural and socio-economic situation as well as the ecumenical and inter-religious context of the Christian communities.
- Development of biblical pastoral material which takes into account the particular social and cultural situations in the different places of the world.
- Collaboration with the World Council of Churches’ *Decade to overcome violence* by developing biblical pastoral materials for Bible groups and organizing activities which help to identify the real problems behind human violence and find lasting solutions.
- Support of the biblical pastoral ministry in Africa and Madagascar through biblical pastoral formation for clergy, religious and laity, through translation, publication and distribution of affordable Bibles adapted to the African cultures, and through further development of centres of the biblical pastoral ministry in Africa.

④ Statistics

Founded	16 th April, 1969
Affiliated to	Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity
President	Bishop Vincenzo Paglia, Terni-Narni-Amelia / Italy
General Secretary	Alexander M. Schweitzer
Moderator Executive Committee	Bishop Arturo Bastes, Sorsogon / Philippines
Full Members	92
Associate Members	227
Members total	319
Countries represented	127
Sub/Regional Coordinators	12
General Secretariat	Stuttgart, Germany
Staff General Secretariat	6 (3 full-time / 3 part-time)
Publications	<p>Worldwide level</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Bulletin Dei Verbum ▪ CBF-Newsletter <p>Regional level</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ La Palabra Hoy (FEBIC-LAC-Region / Latin America) ▪ Word of God in Africa (IMBISA-Region / Southern Africa) ▪ Bulletin d'Information (Middle East-Region) ▪ Communion (Asia)
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