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ANNUAL REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF BICAM - 2007

TO

COORDINATORS AND PROMOTERS
OF BIBLICAL APOSTOLATE
IN AFRICA

0. INTRODUCTION

In late September, during a workshop on “Biblical Apostolate in AECAWA (Anglophone West Africa)”, one of the participants drew my attention to the fact that the obligation of sending reports is not an one-way matter; that is: it is not the national and regional coordinators who have to send a report of their activities to the Director of BICAM; the latter too should send a report to the former. I learnt my lesson and complied to this view, starting with 2007.

1. NARRATIVE REPORT ON 2007 PROJECTS

1.1. Publications

1.1.1. The quarterly publications: they were regularly published till date; including *The Directory of Biblical Apostolate* is at the printing house. The other quarterly publications are the BICAM Newsletter (March, June, September and December 2007) and the Biblical Pastoral Bulletin (June and December 2007).

1.1.2 Pamphlets on *BICAM* and on *Bible Sharing Methods* were published in English (2000 copies), French (2000 copies) and Portuguese (1000 copies).

1.1.3. The Acts of the continental celebration of the Year of the Bible in 2005 are published.

1.2. The visitations

1.2.1. Mozambique and Angola: Efforts to visit these two countries were in vain. My concern is to do something for the Lusophone countries that are geographically and pastorally immersed in an Anglophone or a Francophone environment. In the future, these countries can be a kind of “linguistic region” for more efficient sharing in Biblical Apostolate Ministry. In this direction, I am planning to have a workshop for Lusophone countries in 2008.

1.2.2. Liberia: I cannot still visit the country for lack of communication, even though the money for it is available since 2005. The main problem is that there is no Biblical Apostolate coordinator, the coordination is being done by the Secretary of the Episcopal Conference.

1.2.3. Botswana: Taking advantage of a workshop in Nairobi followed by a congress in South Africa, I visited Botswana from 2nd to 8th September 2007 to discover what was being done in this country and see how, with the collaboration of the IMBISA regional coordinator, we can improve the organization and coordination of Biblical Apostolate in the country. I am grateful to Bishop Frank NUBUASAH, Apostolic Vicar of Francistown, with whom the idea of the visit was conceived and implemented.

1.3. The workshops

1.3.1. The continental workshop: the 6th continental meeting of Biblical Apostolate coordinators was held in Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania, from 30th July to 3rd August 2007, on the theme: *“Bible and Social Issues in Africa”*. This seminar was aimed at preparing the CBF Plenary Assembly in 2008, the Synod on *The Word of God in the Life and Mission of the Church* in 2008, and the Second Synod of the Bishops in Africa in 2009. The participants were 32, coming from 24 countries including Germany, Colombia, Italy and India. The opening mass was presided by His Eminence Cardinal PENGU, Archbishop of Dar Es Salaam and President of SECAM. All the participants and I are thankful to him.

Among the Resolutions and Recommendations of this seminar, I would like to draw your attention to the following:

- The commitment of the participants to:
 - “Consider the time before the Second African Synod (August 2007 – October 2009) years of the Bible, with intensive Biblical Pastoral Ministry in our Dioceses, including concrete actions such as: workshops, conferences, Bible week, Bible Day, Enthronement of the Bible, Ecumenical Biblical meetings, etc.” (Resolutions, 10.1.)
 - “To emphasize the centrality of the Word of God as a common and basic theme of the three events” (Resolutions, 10.3.)
- The Recommendation No. 14 reads:

“In the seminaries and formation houses for consecrated persons, we recommend a Proper Biblical Pastoral Ministry to be introduced in the studies’ programmes. Accordingly, Bible sharing groups should be encouraged and Biblical Pastoral Ministry Groups should be allowed.”

1.3.2. The workshop for Bible Lecturers in AMECEA, in Nairobi, from 20th to 25th August 2007, on the theme: *“Biblical Apostolate in Priestly Formation”*. Thirty-two participants gathered from AMECEA countries and Zimbabwe. Representatives of Bible lecturers (1/seminary), National Coordinators and Bishops in charge of Seminaries in the region were invited. We got only 3 coordinators, including the Bishop in charge of Biblical Apostolate in Kenya.

1.3.3. Workshop on “Biblical Apostolate in AECAWA”: it was in Freetown, Sierra Leone, from 27th September to 1st October 2007. The participants were 30 in total. Two major resolutions were taken: the first one is to resuscitate Biblical Apostolate in AECAWA, which entails a review of the job descriptions of the coordinators and the redaction of guidelines for Biblical Apostolate in AECAWA; the second major resolution is the adoption of the Final Declaration from Dar Es Salaam 2007.

1.3.4. National workshop in Burkina: it was held in Ouagadougou from 26th to 30th November 2007. It was "Training in Biblical Apostolate" workshop (Cf. BICAM Newsletter 2.2007, 2).

1.4. Other seminars

1.4.1. The colloquium in Abidjan organized by the African Traditional Religion Episcopal Commission of CERAO on "*The African Inculturation of the Charismatic Renewal*" (Abidjan, 13-16 March 2007). The Director of BICAM was invited to give a talk on "*The Old Testament Model of Inculturation*".

1.5. Activities and projects postponed

1.5.1. Publications: The writing of *The Biblical Apostolate Course* in French is going on. As for the Guide for Biblical Apostolate in Africa, I am waiting for the adoption of the Job Description of the Director of BICAM and eventually the new Statutes of BICAM, for the publication. These documents can in fact inspire the regions and the countries in their efforts to organize the Biblical Pastoral Ministry at their own levels.

1.5.2. Visitations: See above for Angola, Mozambique and Liberia.

1.6. Other information

1.6.1. Congress on Biblical Apostolate in Rwanda: it was held in the inter-diocesan Major Seminary of Kabgayi, from 17th to 20th September 2007, in preparation to the upcoming Synod of the Bishops on *The Word of God in the Life and Mission of the Church*. The Director of BICAM sent a message of encouragement and communion to the participants.

1.6.2. Answers to the Lineamenta on The Word of God in the Life and Mission of the Church: I made a compilation of the Coordinators responses to some questions of the *Lineamenta* and sent the synthesis to the Secretariat of the Synod and to CBF Secretariat. It is presented as the contribution of Africa at the continental level.

1.6.3. BICAM website: it is almost ready, in English and French. The Portuguese edition will follow later. God willing, it will be activated in January 2008. You will be informed and asked to react.

2. ADMINISTRATIVE MEETINGS

2.1. SECAM Plenary Assembly

A congress on Evangelization in Africa, followed by the 14th SECAM Plenary Assembly, was held in Dar ES Salaam from 10th to 20th January 2007. During this Plenary Assembly, I submitted a triennial report on BICAM activities from October 2003 (13th Plenary Assembly in Dakar) to the end of December 2006.

2.2. The Standing Committee meetings

The first meeting took place at SECAM Secretariat, in Accra, from 26th to 30th March 2007. The second one was in Cairo from 25th to 29th October 2007. During this second meeting, the Bishops have given permission to hold seminars for Lusophone countries; however they will still belong to their region. They also authorized the Director of BICAM to adapt his Job Description to the regions and the countries of continent, to address a request coming from many countries and regions, and in a spirit of

“organic pastoral solidarity”. During the same meeting, the elected members of the BICAM Advisory Board were approved.

2.4. Meetings in SECAM regions and countries

2.4.1. The yearly meeting of the Biblical Apostolate Agents in IMBISA: the meeting was in South Africa from 13th to 20th May 2007. All the countries of the region attended the meeting, except Angola, Lesotho, Mozambique, Namibia and Swaziland. Every participant presented the report of his/her activities and common actions for 2008 were debated.

3. INTERNATIONAL MEETINGS

The Director of BICAM didn't attend any international meeting this year.

4. NEWS OF OUR NETWORK

4.1. Changes of coordinators

In Nigeria, the Bishop in charge of Biblical Apostolate is now Bishop John I. OKOYE, Bishop of Awgu, Enugu State. The national coordinator is Mr. Femi Emmanuel ADEOJO.

In Sudan, Fr. Celestino PREVEDELLO handed over to Fr. James William SILGAT, as national coordinator.

Fr. Janssen KOOS, SMA, Coordinator for Ghana, left Africa for good. He is not yet replaced.

4.2. Life in BICAM Offices

- Many people, including Bishops, priests and lay people, from all the continents come to SECAM Secretariat and honor us by visiting BICAM offices. Among them you can find national and diocesan coordinators. We are grateful to them.
- The position of Secretary was vacant since the end of our continental workshop in Dar. But there will be a provision for it right from the first week of January 2008.
- Our library is full of our publications, mainly the quarterly ones, such as: BICAM Newsletter, Biblical Pastoral Bulletin, and The Directory of Biblical Apostolate in Africa. We are thankful to those who ordered some and are encouraging others to do so.

4.3. Other news

- The first vice-president of SECAM and president of SCEAM's Department for Evangelization, within which BICAM operates, was made a Cardinal on 25th November 2007: Cardinal Adrien Théodore SARR, Archbishop of Dakar, Senegal.
- The National Coordinator of Nigeria got married “in the Lord” on 2nd December 2007.
- Four new members of the Catholic Biblical Federation in Africa: Gabon, Mali, Chad and the Centre Liloba, Kinshasa (Associate Member).

5. PERSONAL ASSESSMENT OF THE YEAR

5.1. The activities

Considering the activities of the current year 2007 I am happy to notice that something is done for the promotion and organization of Biblical Apostolate in Africa. In reality, I owe it to the high motivation and expectations of the lay people, men and women, religious men and women, priests and bishops, coordinators, who work for the sake of the Bible. The greatest challenge for the coming years will be to make it in such a way that the different coordinators do their work, helping them to organize the

Biblical Pastoral Ministry in their regions and countries. I hope that the Synod of next year will stimulate us in this direction.

5.2. Collaboration and networking reinforcement

Efforts are still going on from BICAM side as well as from the coordinators' side. We are thankful in a special way to those who answered our mails in the course of the year. However we would like to remind you that we have a lot to do in the following domains:

- a) **Information sharing:** Some countries and regions are quiet about what they do. Collaboration between us depends also on a two-ways information flux between the different levels of the Church in Africa.
- b) **Answering the mails:** You are kindly invited to answer the mails, at least to acknowledge receipt. It is difficult, even impossible to coordinate activities and people, without a minimum of communication.
- c) **Involving BICAM in your activities:** BICAM is at your service in conceiving and implementing your programmes and activities. It would be good that BICAM is informed about them so that it can have an input, be it a little one.
- d) **Caring for BICAM:** BICAM belongs to all of us. It needs your suggestions and advice to deliver more. Don't hesitate to provide them.

6. Appreciation

To end my report, I would like to thank all those involved in Biblical Apostolate in the continent, who helped me in diverse ways to implement the projects for this year. I add to this list of people the members of *Africa Task Force* (Missio Munich and Church in Need) for their moral and financial support; the Secretary General of the Catholic Biblical Federation for his support and his active collaboration; my colleagues at SECAM Secretariat for their advice and collaboration.

A special mention should be made of the coordinators with whom something was achieved in 2007 and activities planned for the year 2008. May God be their reward and bless all of them in their endeavors.

Accra, 10th January 2008

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