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ANNUAL REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF BICAM – 2008

TO

**COORDINATORS AND PROMOTERS OF BIBLICAL APOSTOLATE
IN AFRICA**

O. INTRODUCTION

Dear Collaborators,

This is the second report of the Director of BICAM to you. It covers the period from January 1st to December 31st 2008. Many things happened in 2008. This report intends to highlight the major events.

1. NARRATIVE REPORT ON 2008 PROJECTS

1.1. Publications

The quarterly publications were regularly published, both the *BICAM Newsletter* (March, June, September and December) and the *Biblical Pastoral Bulletin* (June and December). Other publications of the year include:

- The Proceedings of the 6th continental workshop in Tanzania, from the 30th July to the 3rd August in 2007 (*Bible and Social Issues in Africa. "Where is your brother?" Gen 4:9*);
- A syllabus for teaching Biblical Apostolate in Major Seminaries (*Biblical Apostolate in Priestly Formation – Syllabus*);
- A text book in French for the Biblical formation of the catechumens (*Introduction catéchétique à la Bible. Vol. I*).

1.2. Official visits

Morocco and Tunisia: I succeeded to visit Morocco and Tunisia respectively: 9th – 25th August; 25th August – 5th September 2008. The common reality of the Church in these countries is that the Church is in a minority position many of its members being young people, mostly students, from sub-Saharan African. It follows that the pastoral activities are focused on the youth. In Morocco we have the Aumônerie des Etudiants Catholiques au Maroc (AECAM), its counterpart in Tunisia being the Jeunesse Chrétienne Africaine en Tunisie (JCAT).

Sudan and Uganda: I was in Sudan from 23rd to 30th October, and in Uganda from 30th October to 7th November. It was an opportunity to share the joy and the pains of the National Coordinators of these countries, and to see, in the light of the reality on the spot, how we can enhance our collaboration in

promoting, coordinating and organizing Biblical Apostolate in the same countries. I was particularly impressed by the one-day talks on Biblical Apostolate to the Clergy and some catechists of Jinja Diocese in Uganda.

1.3. Workshops

Out of the four workshops scheduled to hold this year 2008, two were effectively held, one was transformed into a simple meeting (with Lusophone countries) while one is postponed (2009).

1.3.1. Biblical Apostolate in DRC, 11-16 February 2008

The theme of the workshop read “The Word of God in our Small Christian Community” and was aimed at sensitizing the delegates about Biblical Apostolate and finding means and ways of having a national and provincial coordination as well as basic orientations for BA in DRC. Thirty three participants attended the workshop.

1.3.2. Consultation meeting with Portuguese speaking countries, Maputo, 19-23 May 2008

With the concerted effort and help of Bishop SILOTA, the 2nd Vice President of SECAM, Bishop Lucio ANDRICE, Bishop of Xai Xai in Mozambique and in charge of Biblical Apostolate both at the national and IMBISA levels, Fr. Martinho MAULANO, 2nd Deputy Secretary General of SECAM, the Portuguese speaking countries could meet in Maputo, 19th - 23rd May 2008. Guinea Bissau could not attend the meeting, but we are in touch regularly with the Coordinator of the country, while we have no news from Cape Verde. The main decision of the meeting is the need to meet yearly on a linguistic basis and in a rotational way.

1.3.3. Biblical Apostolate in ACERAC Region (French Central Africa), Bangui, 14-19 July 2008

The theme was on “Biblical Apostolate through catechesis”, but the main aim of that workshop was to organize Biblical Apostolate in the region, bringing together the promoters and coordinators of the region for the first time.

1.3.4. Follow up meeting in Nairobi, 19-23 February 2008

It was a follow up of the workshop on “Biblical Apostolate in Priestly Formation in AMECEA”. We met as a team to draft a syllabus meant for teaching Biblical Apostolate in Major Seminaries. The outcome of the meeting is the published syllabus a few months later.

1.3.5. Activities and projects postponed

Publications

The *Textbook for Biblical Apostolate in Africa* is yet to be published. The main reason is that we are waiting for some key publications to be incorporated or to be used; for instance: the Apostolic Exhortation of the Synod on The Word of God that is going on in Rome.

Official visit in Malawi

All the attempts to contact Malawi failed. I hope it will be possible next year.

Workshop on “Biblical Apostolate in Priestly Formation - IMBISA region”

Previously scheduled to be held in South Africa, 14th to 18th April 2008, this workshop is postponed to April 2009 for administrative and management reasons.

2. ADMINISTRATIVE MEETINGS

2.1. SECAM Standing Committee Meetings

I attended the two meetings of the Standing Committee in 2008: the first one in Johannesburg from 5th to 7th February and the second one in Accra from 16th to 19th October. I submitted an annual report on the period from October 15, 2007 to September 2008, during the meeting in Accra. During the same meeting, the broad outlines of the projects for the year 2009 and the extraordinary meeting of BICAM Advisory Board in December 2008 were approved.

2.2. BICAM Advisory Board Meeting

The meeting took place at SECAM Secretariat in Accra from 15th to 18th December 2008. It was the first time the Board was meeting officially since the election of the representatives of the Coordinators was approved by the members of the Standing Committee in October 2007. The main agenda was planning BICAM Pastoral Activities for the next three years (2009-2011). The Board advised the Director of BICAM to focus on the training of the Coordinators in 2009 and 2010.

3. INTERNATIONAL MEETINGS

3.1. The 7th Plenary Assembly of the Catholic Biblical Federation

For the first time, the Federation held its Plenary Assembly in Africa, June 24 – July 3, 2008, on the theme: “The Word of God – Source of Reconciliation, Justice and Peace”. The participants were over 230, with over 56 coming from Africa, excluding the Tanzanian guests, and representing 26 countries. Delegates from Africa met to set up their own priorities for the next 6 years (2008-2014). Two major priorities are noteworthy:

a) Concerning the continental and regional meetings

- A continental plenary assembly to be held every three years;
- The (SECAM) regions to meet at least every two years;
- The next continental meeting should therefore take place in 2010 and it will take into account the two synods of 2008 and 2009.

b) Collaboration with Justice and Peace Commissions

- To work with justice and peace groups/commissions on issues of tribalism, sale of arms, poverty and corruption.

3.2. The Synod on “The Word of God in the Life and Mission of the Church

Africa was well represented at that synod by Cardinals, Bishops, Priests, Religious Men and Women. The President of SECAM, Cardinal Polycarp PENGO, was there together with his immediate predecessor, Archbishop John ONAIYEKAN, Archbishop of Abuja. Archbishop Laurent MONSENGO, Archbishop of Kinshasa, was the Secretary of the synod. He and Archbishop ONAIYEKAN are among the founders of BICAM. A synthesis of your answers to the Lineamenta was sent to the President of SECAM and the two Archbishops. I was informed that the Synod Fathers from Africa made good use of it.

4. SOME CONTINENTAL NEWS

4.1 Newly appointed coordinators

Liberia

Mr. Corey P. SCOTT was introduced as Coordinator for Liberia by the Regional Coordinator for Anglophone West Africa.

Chad

From now on, Fr. Edmond DIONDOH from Mondou Diocese together with Archbishop Matthias N'GARTERI, are in charge of Biblical Apostolate in Chad.

ACERAC (French Central Africa and Equatorial Guinea)

The Commission for Biblical Apostolate is now established. Archbishop Cornelius ESUA, Archbishop of Bamenda (Cameroon) is the President and the National Coordinator of Central Africa Republic, Fr. Philippe GREBALET, is the Secretary.

4.2. Life at BICAM Office

The work is going on. Requests of services are increasing. We are trying to meet them as we can.

A new Secretary

Since January 15, BICAM has employed a new secretary in the person of Mr. Daniel K. AMOAH. His main function is to assist the Director in discharging his duties.

Work in the archives

Thanks to the free service of a trained Confrere in the matter, we are putting order in our archives. It is a guarantee for the future.

4.3. Our collaboration

I am grateful to those who are sending news or reports of their activities. In 2008 we received news and reports from the following:

- Dioceses : Yaoundé (Cameroon), Livingston (Zambia)
- Countries : Burkina Faso, Mali, Central Africa Republic, Togo
- Regions: AECAWA (Anglophone West Africa).

There were a lot of emails exchanges with us, a sign of a vital working relationship.

4.4. Other information

- Africa is represented in the Federation Executive Committee by two members: Bishop Telesphor MKUDE, Bishop of Morogoro (Tanzania) and Mrs. Teresa WILSNAGH from the Catholic Bible Foundation (South Africa).
- The President of SECAM, Cardinal Polycarp PENGU, Archbishop of Dar Es Salaam, sent an appreciation and encouragement letter to all the Coordinators and Promoters of Biblical Apostolate in Africa, for their efforts and mostly for their contributions to the Synod on the Word of God. The letter was sent from Rome in October 2008.

5. PERSONAL ASSESSMENT

The two big events of the year 2008 in the Universal Church were without any doubt the 7th Plenary Assembly of the Catholic Biblical Federation in Africa and the Assembly of the Synod of the Bishops on The Word of God in the Life and Mission of the Church. Both events requested our commitment and have enriched our apostolate, showing mainly new challenges to be addressed. These are moments of grace we should not waste.

There are certainly difficulties: the ones we are used to, as far as communication between us, the answers to mails or the involvement of BICAM in your activities are concerned; or new one, like the current crisis our Federation is undergoing. Nevertheless we should not waste the time of graces the

Plenary of the Federation and the Synod on The Word were. Mainly, let's be ready to receive the Post-synodal Exhortation and use it at maximum for the cause of the Word of God in our continent.

. APPRECIATION

In the letter of SECAM President I have mentioned, Cardinal PENGO had a special thought for all my collaborators. I take this opportunity of my report to convey to you his deep gratitude and his encouragement, on his own personal behalf and on behalf of the Bishops of Africa. I take also this opportunity to thank you for all Africa, the Symposium of the Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar (SECAM) and my humble self owe to your efforts, your sacrifices and your commitment. I end repeating what I have often told you: "without you, there is nothing I can do". Hence I rely on you for the coming years. May the Lord consolidate everyday the work of our hands.

"And the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us" (Jn 1,14).

Accra, 25th March 2009
Annunciation of our Lord

Fr. Moïse Adeniran ADEKAMBI
Director, BICAM-CEBAM