

**3rd AECAWA BIBLICAL AND CATECHETICAL CONFERENCE, KENEMA,
SIERRA LEONE, 1st - 8th SEPTEMBER 2009**

FINAL STATEMENT

PREAMBLE

We, the fifty - seven (57) delegates of the 3rd AECAWA Biblical and Catechetical Conference from the five (5) Anglophone West African countries, having met together in Kenema, Sierra Leone, from the 1st – 8th September 2009, prayed, deliberated and drew practical approaches to the Word of God through catechesis. This is in line with the theme of the conference: **Biblical Apostolate through Catechesis**. Our vision is to make catechesis more biblical.

The pastoral challenges in our region call for an effective catechesis in our biblical apostolate so that we can help ourselves and our people to know, love, live and share the Word of God, for “all scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness” (2 Tim 3:16).

We are of the view that catechizing is not about giving information about Jesus, the man of Nazareth, but presenting Him as a living Word of God so that catechumens can experience Him as the source of their faith. Therefore, there is the need to consider our catechesis in a broader view taking into consideration the human person in a holistic way: mind, heart, custom and culture.

BIBLICAL APOSTOLATE THROUGH CATECHESIS

During the conference, we reflected, debated and shared different experiences in order to draw a new line for our catechesis at diocesan, national and regional levels. We understand that catechesis should be a sharing of experiences of what the catechists themselves have touched, known and seen in their lives: their experience and the power of the Word of God. We re-echo the words of Pope Benedict XVI to the French Pilgrims during the Angelus of Sunday, 30th August 2009 at St. Peter’s Square, when he emphasized that the Word of God is a source of wisdom, of light, of knowledge and life.

We recognized that if catechetical pedagogy is to be at the service of the Word, Religious Educators must work hard to inculcate the art and habit of studying the Word with illustrations, examples, and making use of modern means of communication so as to bring the biblical themes home to the people. We are of the opinion that the community/pastoral approach should be a welcomed method to biblical apostolate and catechesis since the judgment of the Church is revealed not only in magisterial teachings and findings of theologians, but also in the faith understanding of the faithful, which can be verbalized in an outstanding way through direct contact with the Word of God (cf. D.V 21).

We also learnt that the pedagogy used in catechesis is to focus on the Bible as a foundation or the main stream of catechetical approach. However, in practice, this is yet to be realized. While several methods can be used in catechesis, the goal must remain the same namely; to bring man in communion with God.

The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) is a technical expression of a dynamic process of faith formation and commissioning which concludes with full membership into the body of Christ, the church. This process is accompanied by various rites of Christian initiation culminating in the sacraments of baptism, confirmation and Eucharist celebrated in one liturgical ceremony. In this light we are of the conviction that the community should actively journey together with the candidates in the process.

RESOLUTIONS:

In the light of the above, we resolve,

1. that the Bible should be the main source and inspiration for all catecheses.
2. to be active members of Biblical Apostolate and Catechetical Commissions who support and implement its programmes and activities.
3. to foster collaboration amongst our Pastoral Agents in various parishes, dioceses and conferences so as to learn from the experiences and approaches of others, thereby making the Word of God central in our catechesis.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Having observed that our present catechetical pedagogy is not adequately at the service of the Word, we recommend that the method of transmitting the Word of God and the teachings of the church should be such that it is intelligible, understandable and spirit-lifting. It should aim at encouraging every Catholic to read, understand and appreciate God and His message as revealed of old and confirmed by Jesus Christ, the final WORD.
2. We also recommend that pastoral agents should work hard to inculcate the art and habit of studying the Word with illustrations and examples so as to bring the biblical themes home.
3. To mark the Year for Priests, we recommend that priests renew their commitment to Biblical Apostolate and Catechesis in their pastoral ministries.
4. That a pastoral approach to the study of the Bible be made part of the curriculum in our Seminaries, Formation Houses and Catechetical Centres.
5. That there is need for the translation of the Catholic version of the Bible into the local languages and that they should be made accessible and affordable.
6. That the recommendations and resolutions of this conference be implemented in dioceses within our region.
7. We recommend that our Biblical & Catechetical programmes be periodically evaluated and recommendations implemented.

8. that Biblical groups should be established where they do not exist
9. that there should be a programme for Catechesis for life as against Catechesis to sacraments.

Conclusion:

We thank God for his mercies and benevolence over us during this workshop. We thank also those who have made this workshop possible. We join all Catholics in praying for the success of the Second African Synod. May the Holy Spirit guide and lead our Bishops in their deliberations so that it can yield the fruits of reconciliation, justice and peace on the African continent ridden with crises and conflict. May Mary, the star of Evangelization, intercede for us as we strive to achieve our goal.

Delegates of the 3rd AECAWA
Biblical/Catechetical Conference

Approved by

Most Rev. Patrick D. Koroma
(Bishop Chairman)