

25 January 2019

Dear Members of the Catholic Biblical Federation.

Greetings of joy and peace!

I am sure your involvement in the Pastoral Biblical Ministry affirms the insight of the *Aparecida Document* 244 that the power and promise of the Gospel consists in “recognizing the presence of Jesus Christ and following him”. This has been the consistent experience of the Church from the first apostles down to the disciples of all times and places who have encountered the Lord on life’s journey (see Luke 24:13-32).

Throughout the world today, many people hunger and thirst for the life, the healing, and the peace that only Christ can bring. We know that out of the abundance of His love, Christ speaks to people as friends (see John 15:14-15) and lives among us so that He may invite and bring everyone into fellowship with Himself (*Dei Verbum* 2). In this perspective, the Church, since its earliest day has sought to proclaim Christ and make him known (see 1Cor 2:2). This mission is the very heart or *raison d’être* of the Church (see Matt 28:19-20; Mark 6:7-12). We cannot deny *however, that many people remain deprived of that “easy access” to the Lord in Sacred Scripture and preaching which the Council sought (see Dei Verbum 22 and Verbum Domini 115).*

The year 2019 marks the 50th anniversary of the foundation of the Catholic Biblical Federation. The year 2020 marks the 1600th anniversary of the death of Saint Jerome, the great translator of the Bible, who sought to render the Scriptures into the “common” everyday language of ordinary people, so to make the written Word of God available for all. His zeal to make the Scriptures accessible to people arises from his conviction that “ *ignorantia Scripturarum ignorantia Christi est*” (ignorance of Scriptures is ignorance of Christ).

The happy coincidence of these two anniversaries inspired the Executive Committee of the CBF to encourage the CBF members to mark 2020 as a “Year of the Word of God” from the First Sunday of Advent (December 1, 2019) until the feast of Saint Jerome (September 30, 2020). We hope that a year dedicated to the Word of God will help pastors and institutions committed to the Biblical Pastoral Ministry in your countries to renew their efforts to place the Word of God at the center of the life and mission of the Church, as called for by Saint John Paul II (see *Tertio Millennio Adveniente* 36), by Pope Benedict XVI in the light of the 2008 Synod of Bishops (see *Verbum Domini* 73), and most recently by Pope Francis in *Evangelii Gaudium* (see §174).

We encourage you to coordinate with your Episcopal Conference and with the other members of the CBF in your country and region on how to celebrate a Year of the Word of God. We stress the local character of the Year of the Word of God as a project of the members of the CBF in their countries and regions.

Like the experience of the disciples on the way to Emmaus, may this year set many hearts on fire as Jesus encounters them on the roads of life with His Word and Table sharing! May they make room for Him and go forth with joy in sharing their experience of the Risen Lord!

Sincerely yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "+ Luis Antonio G. Cardinal Tagle". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

+ Luis Antonio G. Cardinal Tagle
Archbishop of Manila
President, Catholic Biblical Federation