



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II
FOR THE PRESENTATION OF THE NEW
"GUIDELINES FOR INTERCONFESSIONAL COOPERATION
IN TRANSLATING THE BIBLE"**

Monday, 16 November 1987

*Your Eminence, Lord Coggan, Bishop Ablondi,
Dear friends in Christ,*

Today I joyfully thank the Lord with you for the courage and consolation he unfailingly gives us through his Holy Spirit, making us ever more generous servants of the word of salvation.

The example and the memory of Cardinal Augustin Bea, the nineteenth anniversary of whose death we keep today, has quite properly been recalled just now by Cardinal Willebrands. For very many people, Cardinal Bea was a sure and learned mentor in the important and difficult years that followed the Second Vatican Council. His reliable guidance was especially felt in the sphere of biblical cooperation. Even before the promulgation of the Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, Cardinal Bea welcomed the desire for such cooperation expressed by the then Secretary of the United Bible Societies, Oliver Béguin. After some preliminary discussions, he proposed this collaboration to my predecessor Paul VI, who immediately approved it.

Then the United Bible Societies together with Catholic experts proceeded to the preparation of "Guiding Principles" with a view to helping people all over the world to become familiar with Holy Scripture and to be imbued with its spirit (Cfr. *Dei Verbum*, 25). This is the concern which for centuries now has motivated the members of your Union as they laboured so strenuously and diligently in this field.

I am especially happy to greet you, Lord Coggan and your collaborators. I am pleased that the new revised edition of the "Guidelines" is now ready. It will make possible a fuller cooperation

between the Bible Societies in different countries and local Catholic Churches in the preparation and distribution of editions of Holy Scripture.

This collaboration, as well as providing spiritual nourishment for Christian people, also contributes greatly to our understanding of one another. It brings Christians closer together and so advances the cause of unity.

This is the spirit in which collaboration with the World Catholic Federation for the Biblical Apostolate has grown up. Working in harmony with the hierarchy of the Church, it has responded generously to the huge conciliar programme contained in the Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, which states:

"It devolves on the Bishops, 'who have the apostolic teaching', to give the faithful entrusted to them suitable instruction in the right use of the divine books, especially the New Testament and above all the Gospels, through translation of the sacred texts. Such versions are to be provided with necessary and fully adequate explanations so that the sons and daughters of the Church can safely and profitably grow familiar with the Sacred Scriptures and be penetrated with their spirit.

Furthermore, editions of the Sacred Scriptures, provided with suitable comments, should be prepared also for the use of non-Christians and adapted to their situation. Both pastors of souls and Christians generally should see to the wise distribution of these in one way or another" (*Dei Verbum*, 25).

I wish to encourage your worthy efforts to spread the knowledge of the word of God. As the Council teaches, the force and power of that word sustains the Church and gives nourishment to every soul (Cfr. *ibid.* 21). "For the Word of God is living and active" (*Hebr.* 4, 12). It can "build you up and give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified" (*Act.* 20, 32).

God bless you in your noble work.

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