

Dear friends,

it's a joy and a privilege for me to speak this evening at the event for the closing of the Bible exhibit Verbum Domini II.

This exhibit has been made available to the public by the generosity of the Green Collection of the Green Family in cooperation with the Vatican Apostolic Library, the Vatican Museums, the American Bible Society, the Pontifical Biblical Institute, the Libreria Editrice Vaticana and with 13 other prestigious international institutions.

And I wish here to express my deep gratitude to the Green Family and to all these institutions as well as to their people who have worked so hard to make all this possible.

After two years this Bible exhibit has finally come back to St. Peter's here in Rome, after travelling in the world: United States of America, Cuba and Israel. And it is now looking forward to go to Chile, Argentina, Russia and who knows where else.....

This travelling attitude corresponds meaningfully to the theme chosen for the Verbum Domini II exhibit: God's Word goes out to the Nations!

And this is exactly the missionary mandate which we Christians have received as we read in Mark 16,15 : (Jesus said to the disciples):" Go throughout the whole world and preach the gospel to the whole human race".

A mandate that Christians have taken forward across the dimensions of time and of space, as it was possible to see in this very attractive and rich exhibit, 200 texts and objects, many of them very very rare and unique!

Let me please remind some 'wonders' of this unique exhibit!

As for the time dimension we have gone back to the Ancient Near East era with texts in cuneiform script, fragments of the Qumran-Dead Sea Scrolls (250 aC, a reproduction of the Rosetta Stele (196 aCr), going towards the Papyrus Bodmer XIV-XV (200 dCr) with the meaningful page of the end of Luke Gospel and the beginning of John Gospel, the splendid initial page of the letter to the Colossians of the Codex Vaticanus (325/350 dCr) one of the two oldest complete manuscripts of the Bible, the roman marble sarcophagus portraying Christ and the Evangelists in the boat (IV sec.dCr), pages of the syriac Codex Climaci Rescriptus of the IX century (dCr) with its hidden treasure, the Gospels text in aramaic of the VI cent., the Gospels of Bath, translation of the XI cent. in the "old English", evidently also the original King James Bible of the 1611 but also one of the Torah Scrolls of Jewish community of Kaifeng in China, of the XVII century coming up to nowadays to the electronic Bibles and to the Bible on the Moon, the King James Version on microfilm taken to the moon by the astronaut Edgar Mitchell in the Apollo 14 mission in 1971!!!

As for the space dimension we have visited the greek world of Alexandria of Egypt, homeland of the Septuagint, the north-african world with the Church Fathers, Tertullian, Origen and Augustin and also the Coptic Christian tradition, the far east world, China with the surprising jewish community of Kaifeng the western european world with Jerome and his memorable latin translation, the Vulgata, the british isles with their psalter texts enriched by brilliant miniatures, the eastern European world with the Christian orthodox tradition reverence for the Bible and with the jewish long lasting tradition and love for the Scriptures facing terrible and horrible persecutions along the centuries the american world: the north in the USA as well as in the south in the jungle of the Ecuador with the Huaorani tribe the air digital world and beyond the earth globe the moon with the microfilm of astronaut Mitchell.

Yes God's Word has gone out to the Nations!!!

But Verbum Domini II exhibit we could also say that it is a providential event, not just a mere coincidence !!

The 'missionary mandate' so explicitly described in Verbum Domini II exhibit along the dimensions of space and time, is being reminded to us today with great strength by Pope Francis.

Since the beginning of his pontificate he challenges us all to go out to the peripheries of the world, not only in the spatial dimension but especially in the existential dimension!

In the today's existential peripheries, a very important existential periphery is the Family. I am deeply convinced that the Bible is the first concrete aid for the families! My dream is that every family has his Bible in his own language.

And I am very glad and grateful to know that the Green Collection with this exhibit, together with the American Bible Society, will join us at the World Family Day to be held next year in Philadelphia and we hope that Pope Francis will be present.

Families, where, also the grandparents and the old persons, have an essential role in transmitting the Word of Hope to the world from generation to generation! And, to take forward the missionary mandate, next 28 of september 2014 will share, with the American Bible Society, the Gospel of Mark large point with the 100,000 old people coming to Rome in a meeting in St. Peter's with Pope Francis!!

In conclusion: which is then the value of this exhibit? To fulfill the missionary mandate in the spirit of koinonia!

Bishop Vincent Paglia