

*Movimiento internacional*  
**Somos-Iglesia**

*Movimento Internazionale*  
**Nós somos Igreja**

*Movimento Internazionale*  
**Noi siamo Chiesa**

*Mouvement international*  
**Nous sommes Eglise**

*Internationale Bewegung*  
**Wir sind Kirche**

# *International Movement* **We are Church**

*Chair at present:*  
**Raquel Mallavibarrena**

Penuelas 17  
28005 Madrid  
SPAIN

Tel.: +34 649332654  
email: [rmallavi@mat.ucm.es](mailto:rmallavi@mat.ucm.es)

Internet: [www.we-are-church.org](http://www.we-are-church.org)

## **Statement of *International Movement We Are Church* on the Synod of Bishops “The word of God in life and in the mission of Church” (October 5 – 26, 2008)**

Since the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965), the phrase “listening to the word of God in the Holy Bible” has been a fundamental conviction of the Catholic Church.

In the opinion of the *International Movement We Are Church*, various texts of the Magisterium show that the theology of the word of God was scarcely noticed, not to mention anticipated, in *Dei Verbum* – “the Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation” of the Second Vatican Council.

The last Council brought about an essential awakening for the comprehension of the Bible, but it has not been completed. Therefore, *We Are Church* encourages the bishops participating in the 2008 Synod to discuss the following problem areas and to develop appropriate measures for future-oriented solutions.

1. **The Bible shall not be understood as a repository to substantiate the ecclesiastical doctrine.** It is not a textbook on dogmatics or ethics. This fact is often disregarded by the ecclesiastical proclamation (cf. “Catechism of the Catholic Church”): Sentences from different contexts and genres are combined, methods of exegesis and its underlying principles of interpretation are often neglected. Tendencies to historicize and the claim that isolated passages of the Bible (e.g. Gospel of John) represent the absolute truth contradict the Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation agreed upon by the Council.
2. **The New Testament contains some anti-Judaic passages.** The history of their reception and the influence that these texts have exerted since their origination were disastrous. Therefore the hierarchy needs to disclose and admit prejudice against Jewish people and overcome it.
3. **Historically incorrect expression of the Bible** (e.g. “hypocritical Pharisees”, “God of Vengeance in the Old Testament” and “God of Love in the New Testament”) must not be used again.
4. **The historical critical exegesis is still an important factor for the correct comprehension of Biblical texts.** This approach uses different methods which should also be adopted in official ecclesiastical documents citing Biblical texts and in the ecclesiastical proclamation.
5. **The new approaches to the Bible introduced by “feminist exegesis” should be considered more intensively.** This interpretation of the Bible points out that the male-oriented shape of many biblical texts only occasionally takes into account the experiences of women with the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Numerous texts of the Bible were either written in order to legitimate patriarchy or were abused for this purpose in later times.
6. **The depth-psychological interpretation of biblical texts does not earn enough consideration.** This kind of interpretation starts with the Bible reader’s problems, questions, fears, hope, emotions, day- and night-dreams, opinions, values.
7. **The canonical interpretation of the Bible favoured by some of today’s exegetes opens new perspectives for the Church.** The orientation on the whole canon of the Scripture should liberate from any totalitarian, standardizing purpose and show the canon of the Bible as a manifold, pluralistic and pluralism-ensuring construction. In this sense, the Bible could become a “school of plurality” (Otmar Fuchs).
8. **“Unity in diversity” is enormously important for the understanding of Church and Christian ecumenism.** Once the manifold whole of the Hebrew and Greek scriptures are seen as intended unity, plurality is supported. In this context, the Bible becomes an ecclesiological model of real ecumenism as unity in diversity.

9. **There is no clear idea of “revelation.”** The Second Vatican Council did not declare how the revelation by God is to be conveyed with the historicity of humanity in order to secure God’s and humanity’s freedom, avoiding a mythological manner of speech.
10. **The revelation of God in the world’s religions and its relationship to Judaic-Christian revelation is largely unclear.**
11. **The “inspiration of the Bible” was and is often misunderstood by the people.** God, and respectively the Holy Spirit, is said to have whispered the words into the biblical authors’ ears. This imagination should urgently be revised.
12. **In the practice of the Church, often a “double” Bible can be found:** the Bible of the scientific exegetes, and the Bible of the “common” Bible readers who are largely uninformed on the work of the scientists but religiously interested.

The document, “The interpretation of the Bible in the Church,” of the Papal Biblical Commission objectively shows the different ways of accessing the Bible and criticises them constructively. Inculturating the biblical interpretation is explicitly encouraged, pointing out the biblical Scriptures being situation related. Fundamentalist approaches to Biblical interpretation are explicitly condemned as inaccurate.

In order not to increase the danger of a “double” Bible, a fruitful dialogue between both sides in an atmosphere of equality will be necessary at this synod and in the future. For this purpose, new measures of how to deal with each other and the different approaches to Biblical interpretation have to be found.

Translation: Manon Vollprecht / Matthias Blaha / Aisha Taylor

**Please contact:**

Raquel Mallavibarrena (Chair)	(Spain)	+34 649332654	rmallavi@mat.ucm.es
Christian Weisner (Media)	(Germany)	+49 172-518 40 82	media@we-are-church.org
Edith Kuropatwa-Fèvre	(Belgium)	+32 2 56 70 964	ekf.paves@telenet.be
Sefa Amell i Comas	(Catalunya/Spain)		sefa.amell@menta.net
Enrique Orellana	(Chile)		somosiglesiachile@hotmail.com
Giovanni Politi	(Finland)	+358505290144	giovanni.politi@kolumbus.fi
Helen McCarthy	(Ireland)		wearechurchireland@eircom.net
Vittorio Bellavite	(Italy)	+39 02 70602370	vi.bel@iol.it
Aasmund Vik	(Norway)		aasmund.vik@nationaltheatret.no
Maria João Sande Lemos	(Portugal)	+351 91 460 2336	mjoaosandel@gmail.com
Aisha Taylor	(United States)		ataylor@womensordination.org

**International Movement We Are Church**

**Background Information**

The International Movement We Are Church, founded in Rome in 1996, is represented in more than twenty countries on all continents and is networking world-wide with similar-minded reform groups. We Are Church is an international movement within the Roman-Catholic Church and aims at renewal on the basis of the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965). We Are Church was started in Austria in 1995 with a church referendum.