

A: GOSPEL SHARING

A\4

WITH CHRIST WE SHARE OURSELVES

(Step 4 and 5 of Gospel Sharing)

TOPICS OF ASIPA TEXTS:

A : GOSPEL SHARING (7 steps)

B : SMALL CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES

C : A PARTICIPATORY CHURCH

D : TRAINING FOR PARISH TEAMS

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AsIPAA: GOSPEL SHARING
Programmes for Training the Christian Community

A\4

WITH CHRIST WE SHARE OURSELVES

(Step 4 and 5 of Gospel Sharing)

Prepare beforehand

- Bibles for all participants
- Card of the 7 step method of gospel sharing
- Decorated place for the Bible. Candle

INTRODUCTION

After a gospel sharing session some neighbours stayed behind and talked to each other. They felt uneasy about some of the things in gospel sharing, especially about the silence in step 4 and the personal sharing in step 5.

“This is something new in our Church today” they protested. “We never heard of personal sharing before. I find it difficult and strange. In former times we were just told to say our prayers and listen to the priest.”

This is our question today also: What is the deeper meaning of silence and sharing in the 7- step way of gospel sharing?

A. STEP 4: THE DEEPER MEANING OF SILENCE

1. Silence in Scripture

- Form small groups of 2/3.
- Each group receives one of the Bible texts below.
- Discuss the question.
- Report after 5 minutes.

Question:

What makes silence in these biblical texts so “filled with meaning”?

- (1) Matthew 4,1-4
[Jesus alone in the desert for 40 days]
- (2) Luke 6,12-16
[Jesus spends the whole night in prayer alone]
- (3) Psalm 131,2
[To become “still” in God’s arms]

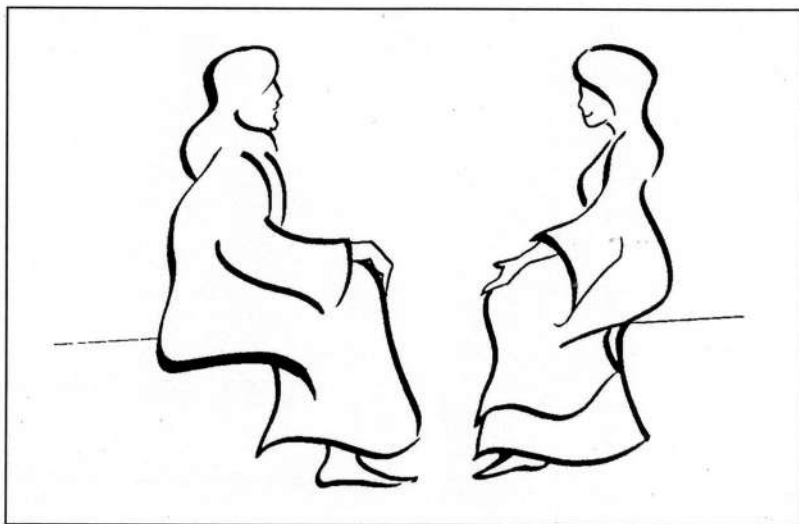
Supplement:

- The loneliness of the desert and the silence of the night made it possible for Jesus to be there for his father alone.
- It was the closeness to God which made this time of silence meaningful for Jesus. It was filled with the light of God which gave him deep insight into what he had to do next in his life.
- The silence of a baby in his/her mother’s arms is filled with happiness, the feelings of security and trust.

2. Silence in gospel sharing helps us to remain with Christ

In step 4, the facilitator announces a certain period of silence. This silence gives us the chance to sit down next to Jesus and remain with him in love.

- Look at the picture.



- Discuss in the whole group:

Question:

- *What can we do during this time of silence in step 4?—*
- *How can we make it meaningful? —*

Supplement:

(All read the supplement silently. Then they share on the question, "What other points do we find in the supplement which are additional to our own findings?")

- Become "still" in the loving presence of the Lord.
- Expose ourselves to the "smiling face" of God.
- Allow ourselves to be loved by him.
- Repeat a certain word or phrase from our text over and over again. It may be the word which eventually struck us most during the time of "picking out" a word in step 3.
- Spread out all your troubles before the Lord and ask him to look at them with mercy. Something will then happen to you.
- Repeat the phrase, "Lord have mercy" or "Jesus". Such repetitions can help us to keep away all our own clever thoughts and even our worries. They help us to become "empty" before God. And God will fill this "emptiness" with his spirit, new insights and love.

Eventually, each one of us has to find his/her own way of using this precious time of silence in step 4.

B. STEP 5: THE DEEPER MEANING OF SHARING

In step 5 of gospel sharing we share with one another on a “word which has touched us personally” in the time of silence.

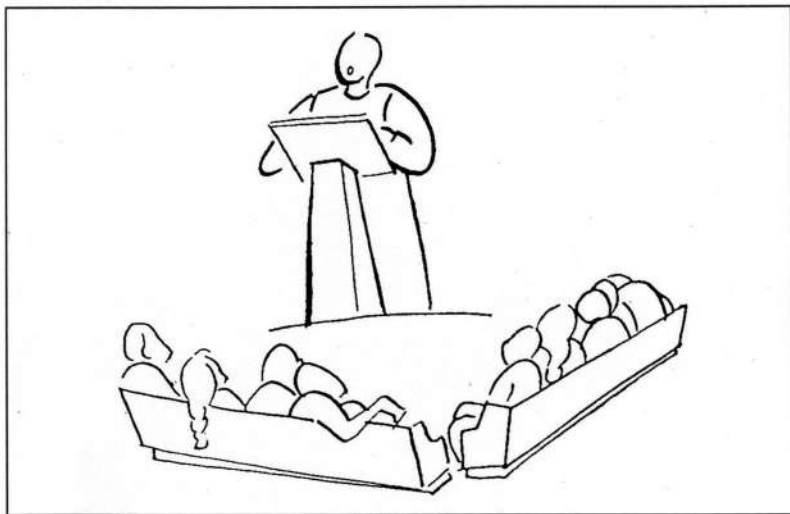
1. “Personal sharing” not “preaching” or “discussing”!

- Discuss the questions below in small groups of 2/3.
- Report for each picture. Take 3 minutes for each.

Questions:

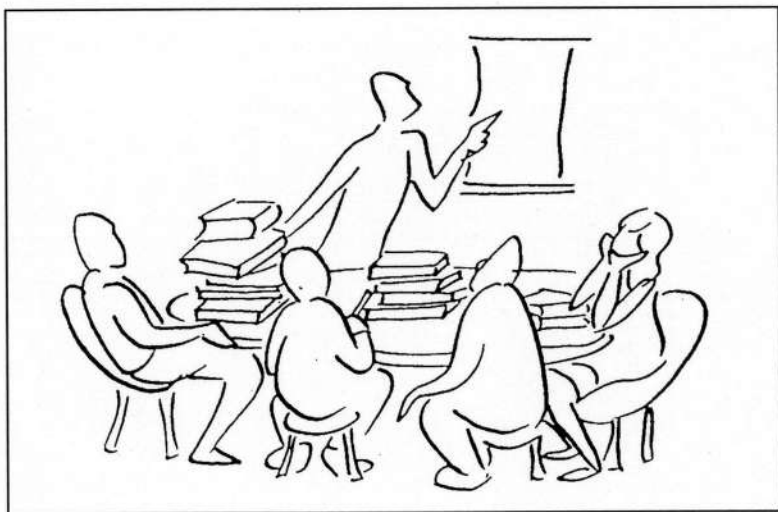
- *What is the purpose of each of these three different “Bible meetings” below? —*
- *How would people feel in these three different meetings? —*

1) “Preaching”



Supplement:

We need preaching. We need somebody who explains the hidden message of scripture. We need preachers who share with us how the Universal Church understands a certain text. All this should happen in the homily and in sermons. The preacher talks, all others listen.

2) "Discussing"**Supplement:**

The purpose of the second meeting is to discuss the original meaning of the biblical text. The participants will use phrases like, "I disagree with your opinion" or "a certain commentary says this or that about our text." People feel like they are in school. Some may even feel too stupid to follow the clever arguments.

3) “Sharing”



Supplement:

The purpose of the third meeting is to share with other believers our experience with God's word. Members of the group start sharing by saying, "I am touched by this word, because..." or "I am struck by this phrase, because.."

People sense the presence of Christ, feel accepted by the group and are strengthened in the faith.

SUMMARY:

In step 5 of gospel sharing we want personal sharing and not preaching and discussing. Of course, in Church we do need preaching and discussing. It is common sense, however, that we cannot do everything at the same time. If a cook mixes the soup with the pudding he will spoil the whole meal!

If some words or concepts in the text are difficult to understand, they can be explained before step 1, or better still, in step 6 if an expert is present. Otherwise, difficult texts can be referred to the priest or a biblical expert.

Now we have to ask ourselves:

What are the deeper reasons for personal sharing?

2. We find “personal sharing” in scripture

- Form small groups of 2/3.
- Each group receives one of the Bible texts below.
- Discuss the question.
- Report after 5 minutes.

Question:

Why do we call these texts “personal sharing” and not “preaching”? —

- (1) John 17,11b-13
[“....that they may be one like us”.]
- (2) Matthew 26,36-38
[“My soul is sorrowful to death....”]
- (3) Galatians 2, 19-20
[“I have been crucified with Christ....”]
- 4) 1 John 1,3-4
[“What we have seen and heard....”]

Supplement:

- Paul reveals his very personal relationship with Christ.
- Exactly ten times St. Paul uses the words “I” and “ME” in these two verses of Galatians 2,19-20.
- If Paul were “preaching” he would rather say, “My brothers and sisters, you think that you are alive. That is quite wrong. You are dead. It is Christ who makes you alive.....!”
- Jesus reveals something very personal about his intimate life with God the Father.
- Jesus pours out his heart to the three sleepy disciples in the garden. He shares his personal fear and distress.
- **This “personal sharing” is the most powerful proclamation of God’s message. We share what we have “seen and heard ourselves”, as St. John says.**

3. “Personal sharing” is God’s way of saving us

There is yet an even deeper dimension to “sharing”. “Personal sharing” is the way in which God has redeemed us.

- Discuss in the whole group

Question:

Why can we say, “Personal sharing is the way in which God has saved us”?—

Supplement:

- “The Word was made flesh”: Christ shares our human nature that we may share in his divine nature.
- Jesus shares with us our joys and sufferings, our feasts and miseries, our life and death.
- The whole life of Jesus, from his birth to his death was “giving himself” or “sharing himself” with us.
- In the Eucharist Jesus celebrates this personal and radical sharing of his whole life until the end of time. He did not say, “Take these lecture notes and study them”.
He said, “Take and eat this is my body!”

Gospel sharing, therefore is not just a “modern” thing. It is deeply rooted in the way Jesus has shared with us his life and death.

4. Some practical points about sharing:

If members of a group find it difficult to share personally:

- Then start sharing in “buzz groups”, that means share with your immediate neighbour in the group, without a “report” to the whole group.
- Shy members can just read again one word or phrase in step 5 and say, “I am touched by this word” without further comment.
- Encourage the shy members to take an active part in reading, picking out words and praying.
- **Nobody should be forced** to share. Absolute freedom!
- Sharing is **not a public confession** of sins.
- **If somebody “preaches”** or wants to start a discussion we do not react. We rather wait and talk about it in the evaluation afterwards. (Use “Self-evaluation” in AsIPA Text A3 pages 7 & 8.)

PRAYER

- Let us keep silence for a minute and remember the Lord’s presence.
- I invite all who wish to thank the Lord for sharing our lives, our happiness and our troubles.

METHOD OF ASIPA TEXTS

ASIPA TEXTS are compiled for Christian men and women at grass root level of the parish. They can be conducted most fruitfully in Small Christian Communities, Neighbourhood Communities, Parish Pastoral Councils or any other small groups in the parish.

ASIPA TEXTS can also be used with larger groups, e.g. in the parish hall - provided the “participatory method” is maintained in smaller working groups.

Features of the “ASIPA approach”

1. ASIPA TEXTS adopt a **“participatory approach”** in which all participants of a group search and discover for themselves as far as they are able to.
2. The texts are compiled in such a way that the facilitator can use them with a **minimum of preparation**.
3. The facilitator is requested to **follow the text** as closely as possible and allow the participants to contribute when indicated in the text.
4. The facilitator is not content with one answer to a question but he/she encourages as many participants as possible to search for an answer. **“Buzz groups”** of 2/3 are helpful to achieve maximum participation.
5. The **SUPPLEMENT** can help add to the findings of the participants and summarize them.
6. The **SUMMARY** is meant to be used as ‘input’.

ASIPA:

As-ian -I-ntegral -P-astoral -A-pproach

The Asian Bishops declared in the Final Statement of their Fifth Plenary Session in Bandung: The Church of 1990s has to be a "Participatory Church", a "Communion of Communities", a Church that "witnesses to the Risen Lord" (*FABC5,#8*).

The question was, how to promote this "new way of being Church". Therefore, late in 1993, jointly sponsored by the FABC Offices of Human Development and of Laity, a consultation meeting was held in Malaysia. It was during this consultation that the pastoral process for promoting a "Participatory Church" in Asia was termed ASIPA: Asian Integral Pastoral Approach.

ASIPA TEXTS (training programmes) follow this directive:

ASIAN

They want to implement the vision of the Asian Bishops and help Asian Christians face Asian life in the light of the gospel.

INTEGRAL

They aim at achieving a balance between the "spiritual" and the "social", between the individual and the community, between hierarchical leadership and the co-responsibility of the laity.

PASTORAL

They train the laity in their pastoral mission in Church and world.

APPROACH

The process of ASIPA TEXTS can be described as a pastoral approach which is "Christ- and Community centred". It involves the participants of workshops to search for themselves and allows them to experience a "New Way of Being Church."
