



B: SMALL CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES

B/8A THE EUCHARIST Making us one

TOPICS OF AsIPA TEXTS:

A : GOSPEL SHARING

B : SMALL CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES

C : A PARTICIPATORY CHURCH

D : TRAINING FOR PARISH TEAMS

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B\8A

THE EUCHARIST MAKING US ONE

*Prepare beforehand
One missal for the closing prayer
Some paper and pens
Bibles for everyone*

INTRODUCTION

Some of us are fortunate enough to be able to celebrate Eucharist weekly, if not daily. We love the 'Mass', we sing, pray and are sent forth each week. Do we really understand what we are doing, or what we are agreeing to when we say AMEN so many times during the Mass? We will deepen our appreciation for the Eucharist in this session.

Begin with some prayer and silence or a simple hymn.

A. A FAMILY AFFAIR.

Read the story below in the whole group and discuss the questions following:

Story

Friday evenings were always a bit special for Mr. and Mrs. Song. They would prepare a meal together with their four children and they all would make an effort to be together. It was important for the whole family to be there. One Friday

evening, only Mr and Mrs Song were preparing the dinner. The phone rang and it was their daughter Lily who was out with her friends and asked if she could stay out since her friends asked her to go shopping and then to dinner.

Mr. Song was very disappointed but he said, OK. Then, when the dinner was ready, only Joe and Chris were there. Chris had just come in from a game of football and looked awful but he just sat down to table. At least they were there and could enjoy the meal together. Mrs. Song realized that Michael, her second son had gone up to take a shower and discovered he had fallen asleep after his shower. The dinner started without him. Mr. & Mrs. Song looked at each other and wondered why the meal together was so difficult to keep going and were worried about how they would be as a family in the future.

Discuss in the whole group

Questions for reflection

- *What is happening in this story?*
- *Compare the family meal of the Song Family with our Sunday celebration of the Eucharist?*

Supplement

Read the points aloud or silently and discuss any points which were missed and which you feel are important.

- The children in the family take for granted the meaning and preciousness of the family meal. In the same way many Catholics are not aware of the importance and beauty of the Eucharist.
- The family is in danger of losing their unity and closeness if the children don't try a little harder to be part of the family. Catholics who do not feel responsible for the life of the Church and are just bystanders at Eucharist put the whole community in danger.

- The parents will have to remind the children of why they agreed on this meal every Friday. An important part of the teaching of the Church is teaching about the meaning of our worship and rituals. We need to remind ourselves regularly why we celebrate the Mass and the importance of Sunday.
- The Song family enjoyed the meal and participated more when they also took responsibility to prepare the meal together. If the parish liturgical committee does not prepare well and the singing is done without any practice and the homily is poor, the people will feel very disappointed because their celebration is not respected.
- The basic love and care between the family members is reflected in their willing presence. Similarly in the Eucharist we express the love and care we have for each other and for God in the way we are present.

B A DEEPER LOOK AT THE MEANING OF THE EUCHARIST

- *Form small groups of 3 to 4*
- *Read one set of Scripture passages and answer the question.*
- *Write you answers on a piece of paper*
- *Read one passage from the Church teachings, answer the question and write down your answers.*
- *Share with the whole group on both sections after 20 minutes.*

1. What the Scriptures say

- a) Mark 14: 22-28 (take and eat)
1Cor 10: 16-17 (the cup we bless)
- b) John 6:53-58 (unless you eat my flesh)
1 Cor 11: 26-29 (proclaiming his death)

Question for reflection on the scriptures

What reasons for celebrating Eucharist do we find in the text?

2. What the Church teaches

“When you are teaching, command and exhort the people to be faithful to the assembly of the church. Let them not fail to attend, but let them gather faithfully together. Let no one deprive the church by staying away; if they do, they deprive the body of Christ of one of its members – do not make light of your own selves, do not deprive our Saviour of his members, do not rest, do not scatter his body.”¹

“If we share the same bread, if we become one and the same body, why not have one and the same love and let this powerful bond unite us?

You take part in this meal, which God gives us: you should be the most merciful of men. You have drunk the blood of the Lord, and you are still unable to recognize your brother? In the Church we should behave as in a house, which belongs to all of us: we form one body. We have the same baptism, the same table, the same source and also the same Father..²

Question for reflection on the text

What does the passage tell you about your participation in the Eucharist?

Supplement

Scripture

- Jesus is offering us the bread of life and the cup of salvation. How could we refuse such a gift of life everlasting?

- We believe that the body and blood of Jesus Christ is what the whole world needs to return to God the Father.
- The celebration of Eucharist brings us into unity with God and our fellow Catholics in a special way as the Body of Christ.
- The Eucharist helps us to be a people on the way, while we wait for the second coming of Jesus and for our own end.
- If we take part in the Eucharist meaningfully we would realize that we are called to be one and to witness to the unity that is in God. We are also required to make God's mercy real in our lives.
- Because we have one father, we believe that each and every member of the body is precious in God's sight. Each and every one is also important for the work of bringing hope and peace to the world.

C. OUR PARTICIPATION IN EUCHARIST

The Church earnestly desires that all the faithful be led to that full, conscious, and active participation in liturgical celebrations called for by the very nature of the liturgy. Such participation...is their right and duty by reason of their baptism.³

“Be what you see... receive what you are... The Body of Christ.”⁴

For our personal reflection

The church is exhorting us urgently to be fully aware of what we are doing at Eucharist and to live this out in our daily lives. From the discussion so far, what do you feel about your own participation in Eucharist and what can be improved?

For group discussion

What aspects of the celebration are more difficult for you to remain involved? Why?

What can we do about it? We are only able to change ourselves. We should not discuss how other people can improve.

CONCLUSION

Let us pray that we may be more lovingly and consciously the Body of Christ. That we may realize that the Eucharist we participate in is a celebration of the community of the Body of Christ and a strengthening of that same Body of Christ.

Read a Preface from one of the Sundays of Ordinary Time as a prayer of praise and thanks to end.

Sing a hymn about the body of Christ or about unity.

¹ *Didascalia Apostolorum* a third century document attributed to a Bishop of Northern Syria, chapter 13.

² St. John Chrysostom

³ Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy paragraph 14.

⁴ St Augustine of Hippo, Sermons #272.

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."
