

C: A PARTICIPATORY CHURCH

C\4

CO-RESPONSIBLE FELLOW WORKERS NOT 'HELPERS'

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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ASIPA C: A PARTICIPATORY CHURCH
Programmes for Training the Christian Community

C\4

CO-RESPONSIBLE FELLOW WORKERS NOT 'HELPERS'.

INTRODUCTION

There was a happy parish priest who used to say:

“My parish is alive. I never have trouble in getting people to help me. Whenever I need somebody, good helpers come forward. So I have quite a number of committees, organizations and little groups.”

The parish priest, however, did not realise that a number of people in his parish did not feel very happy.

1. Discuss with the whole group:

Questions:

- *How do you feel about this parish? —*
- *How may the helpers of the priest feel? —*

Supplement:

- Some people in this parish may feel “used” by the parish priest for his own plans, although these plans may be very good.
- They remain helpers of the parish priest. It will be difficult for them to experience their common calling to take part in Christ’s task and mission.
- Therefore, this parish is not really a “participatory Church” although many people are actively involved, helping the priest.

This is our question today:

What should the Christians in the parish be:

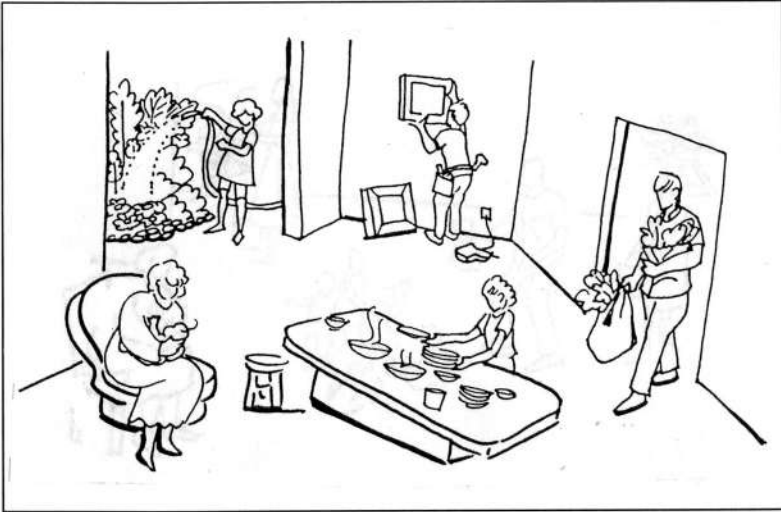
“Helpers” of the priest or “co-responsible fellow workers” in the common task and mission of the Church?

A. “CO-RESPONSIBILITY” IN A FAMILY

1. Discuss in the whole group

Questions:

- *Where do we see “co-responsibility” in the family in this drawing below?—*
- *What would happen if the mother were sick or the father unable to work?—*
How could “co-responsibility” show itself in these situations?—
- *Describe the attitude of an employed “helper” in a family who does NOT feel “co-responsible”.—*



Supplement:

- Every member of a family will say, “It is my business that all in the family are happy and well”. In a good family, all are concerned about the well-being of everyone else; they rejoice and suffer together.

For instance, when the mother is sick the elder sister will not say, “It is not my business to look after my little brother. This is the business of my mother. I just help her when she calls me.”

- “It is not my business” - this attitude reveals a “helper” mentality.

B. “CO-RESPONSIBILITY” IN THE EARLY CHURCH

Let us now consult the Bible and find out how the faithful in the Early Church felt “co-responsible” for the life of the Church.

1. Small groups of 2/3:

- Choose and read one or two of the texts below.
- Discuss the question.
- Report after 10 minutes.

Question:

How can we see in these texts that the early Christians were not just “helpers” of the Apostles but felt “co-responsible” for Christ’s mission? —

- (1) Acts 2,1-4 [The Spirit of God makes all responsible for proclaiming the message of Christ]
- (2) Acts 4,32-35 [Caring for each other]
- (3) Acts 6,1-6 [Selecting elders]
- (4) Acts 8,1-4 and Acts 11,19-21
[“Lay-people” flee from Jerusalem during the persecution and proclaim the gospel wherever they go]
- (5) Acts 13,1-4 [The small Christian community of Antioch takes responsibility for bringing the message of Christ to other countries]

- (6) Acts 15,1-4 [All members of the community make it “their business” to settle an argument about circumcision]
- (7) Romans 16,1-16 [The long list of fellow workers of St. Paul who “worked for the Lord”]

Summary:

- The Early Church felt like a family of brothers and sisters. Jesus himself said that all who do the will of his Father are his mother, brother and sister (Luke 8,19-21).
- All members of the Early Church, the apostles and all the other faithful, made it “their business” to proclaim the message of Jesus wherever they went. In fact, in Antioch none of the apostles was present when the lay Christians founded the Church.
- All members of the Early Church took responsibility for caring for each other and prayed as a family community for Peter when he was put into prison.
- Another example of co-responsibility in the Early Church: All made it “their business” to settle difficulties in the community and to take part in electing worthy candidates to become deacons.
- Therefore St. Paul calls his companions not just “his helpers”, but “fellow workers” and “chosen servants of the Lord”.

In short,

in the Early Church ALL members of the community identified with the task which Christ gave them and took an active part in fulfilling it. This we call “co-responsibility”.

C. CO-RESPONSIBILITY IN THE CHURCH OF ASIA TODAY

1. What is the task of the Church in Asia today?

- Discuss in the whole group
(Write findings on chalk-board or sheets of newsprint.)

Question:

In your opinion, what is the task of the Church in Asia in this period before and after the year 2000?—

2. How the Asian Bishops see the task of the Church

- Small groups of 2/3;
- Each group reads and discusses one of the texts below.
[The texts are taken from the “Final Statement of Fifth Plenary Assembly” of all Asian Bishops (FABC), Bandung 1990]
- Report after 15 minutes.

Question:

What “task of the Church” do the Asian bishops name in this text?—

(a) The social and economic situation in Asia

There is in Asia:

- “An unchanging reality of injustice - massive poverty, hundreds of millions of people are debarred from access to natural resources.”
- “Exploitation of the environment”.
- “Traditional patterns of discrimination of women continue in force”.
- “Exploitative tourism”. (Art. 2.2.1)

(b) Our Christian challenge in Asia

- “Our challenge is to proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom of God: to promote justice, peace, love, compassion, equality and brotherhood in these Asian realities.” (Art. 1.7)
- “Our Asian world needs the values of the Kingdom and of Christ in order to bring about the development, justice, peace and harmony with God, among peoples and with all creation that the peoples of Asia long for.” (Art. 3.2.5)
- “That the Church, consistent with its social doctrine, investigate and remove from within its own structures and practices whatever obstructs human rights and justice.” (Art. 7.3.2.1)

(c) When the Church in Asia truly becomes Asian

- “It is by responding to and serving the needs of the peoples of Asia that the different Christian communities become truly local Churches.”(Art.3.3.1)
- “At the center of this new way of being Church is the action of the Spirit of Jesus.... It is nothing more and nothing less than a following of Jesus-in-mission, an authentic discipleship in the context of Asia.”(Art. 9.1)

(d) The Church should be a Communion of Communities

- “The Church in Asia will have to be a communion of communities, where laity, Religious and clergy recognize and accept each other as sisters and brothers. They are called together by the word of God which, regarded as a quasi-sacramental presence of the Risen Lord, leads them to form small Christian communities (e.g. neighbourhood groups, Basic Ecclesial Communities and ‘Covenant’ communities.)
- There, they pray and share together the gospel of Jesus, living it in their daily lives as they support one another and work together, united as they are ‘in one mind and heart’”. (Art. 8.1.1)

(e) The Church in Asia should be a prophetic sign

The Church in Asia will have to be:

- “A leaven of transformation in this world and one that serves as a prophetic sign daring to point beyond this world to the ineffable Kingdom that is yet fully to come.” (Art. 8.1.4.)
- “A participatory Church, where the gifts that the Holy Spirit gives to all the faithful - lay, Religious and cleric alike - are recognized and activated, so that the Church may be built up and its mission realized.” (Art. 8.1.2)

3. Discuss in whole group:

Question:

What “tasks and challenges for the Asian Church” will be the most difficult ones for us to face? —

CONCLUSION

These tasks of the Church in Asia belong to Christ’s mission in Asia in the 1990s.

We are invited by Christ to take part in his mission and assume co-responsibility together with our bishops and priests.

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."
