

C: A PARTICIPATORY CHURCH

C\6 OUR 'DREAM' OF A PARTICIPATORY CHURCH

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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C\6

OUR 'DREAM' OF A PARTICIPATORY CHURCH

INTRODUCTION

When we go to the ticket office at the railway station to get a ticket, we cannot just say, "Sir, I want a ticket." The person behind the counter will ask, "Excuse me, where do you want to go to?" In other words, when we go on a journey by train or by bus, we have to know where we wish to arrive.

It is the same with our work in the parish. Where do we want to go? Our bishops encourage us to leave behind the "old way of being Church" and go forward towards a 'new way of being Church' which they call a 'participatory Church'.

Today we ask ourselves:

What is the direction in our pastoral work?

What is our 'dream' of a participatory Church which we wish to achieve eventually?

A. THE 'OLD' AND 'NEW' WAYS OF BEING CHURCH

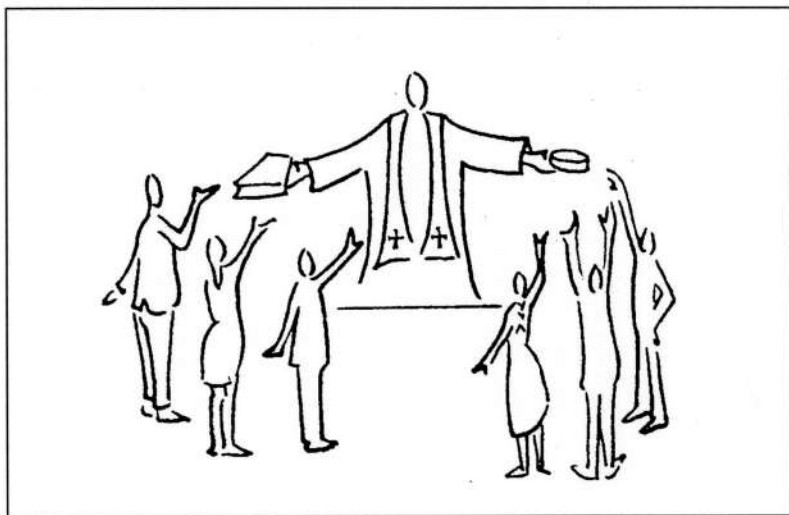
There are many “faces” of the “old way” of being Church.

Each of the following drawings emphasizes only one of them, although in reality they will overlap.

- **Groups of 5/6:**
- Each group is given one of the drawings below;
- Discuss the questions;
- Report after 20 minutes.

1. The “provided-for” Church

The laity wait for the priest to take all the initiative and to provide what is needed.



Questions:

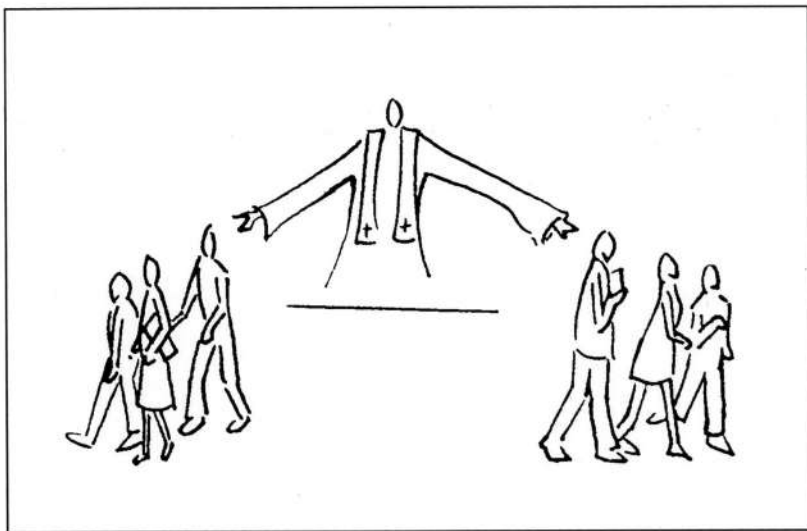
- a. Give examples where you have experienced a “provided-for Church”.—
- b. What is your dream of a “New Way of Being Church”?—
- c. What do we find in the following texts that tell us about the “New Way of Being Church”?—

TEXTS:

- *The new way of being Church* was initiated by the 2000 bishops who assembled at the Council of Vatican II in the 1960s. So we read in their document on the Church:
- “The lay people share in their own way the priestly, prophetic and kingly office of Christ...” All the faithful “carry on the mission of the whole Christian people in the Church and in the world.” (Art.31)
- The new Law of the Church of 1983 tells us very clearly: All of Christ’s faithful “contribute, each according to his or her own condition and office, to the building up of the Body of Christ” (Can.208)

(2) The laity are the 'helpers' of the priest

In this “vision of Church” the laity are regarded as the “prolonged arm of the clergy”.



Questions:

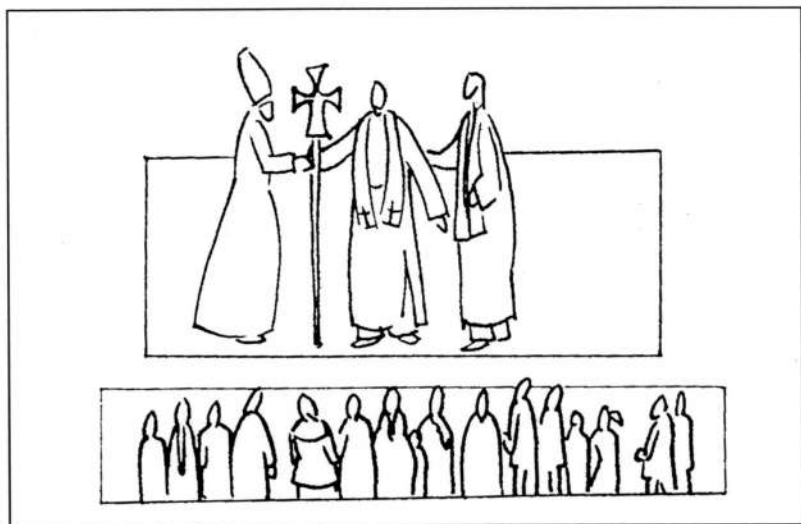
- Give examples where the lay faithful appear to be the “prolonged arm of the priest”.—*
- What is your dream of a “New Way of Being Church”?—*
- What do we find in the following texts that tell us about the “New Way of Being Church”?—*

TEXTS:

- In the new way of being Church lay people do not just “help” the priest. They are no longer the “prolonged arm of the clergy” as was said by Church leaders before Vatican II.*

- In the new way, they become “co-responsible” fellow workers in the common mission of Christ. (John Paul II, *The Lay Faithful*, Chapter II and III; Vatican II: LG, 31).
- In this new way of working together, the priest and other pastoral leaders are not “dominating and bossing leaders”. They exercise a serving style of leadership which is encouraging, enabling the people, training, inspiring and empowering them.
- This new style of leadership puts into practice what the Lord commanded: “Among the pagans....the great men make their authority felt. This is not to happen among you.” (Mt 20,25-26) “You have only one Master, and you are all brothers [and sisters].” (Mt 23,8)

3 A Church which is divided into clerics and the laity



Questions:

- a. *Give examples where you have experienced a division between the clergy and the laity.—*
- b. *What is your dream of a “New Way of Being Church”?—*
- c. *What do we find in the following texts that tell us about the “New Way of Being Church”?—*

TEXTS:

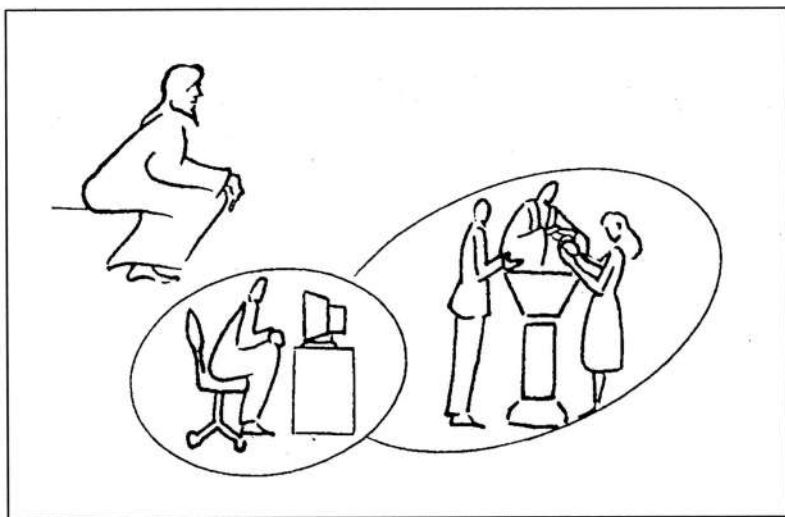
- *In the new way of being Church “... laity, Religious and clergy recognize and accept each other as sisters and brothers.”*

These are the words of the Asian Bishops in the Final Statement of their 5th Plenary Assembly in Bandung 1990.

- In the new way of being Church the clergy and laity continue to have different roles but there is “true equality between all with regard to the dignity and to the activity which is common to all the faithful.” (Vatican II: LG 32)
- There are no classes of the ‘learned’ and the ‘ignorant’. All have some knowledge and experience to share.

4. Many Church activities - but little time for Christ

Some dream of a Church where many projects and activities are undertaken. The danger is to over emphasize the outward activities while forgetting the centre of all: Christ himself.



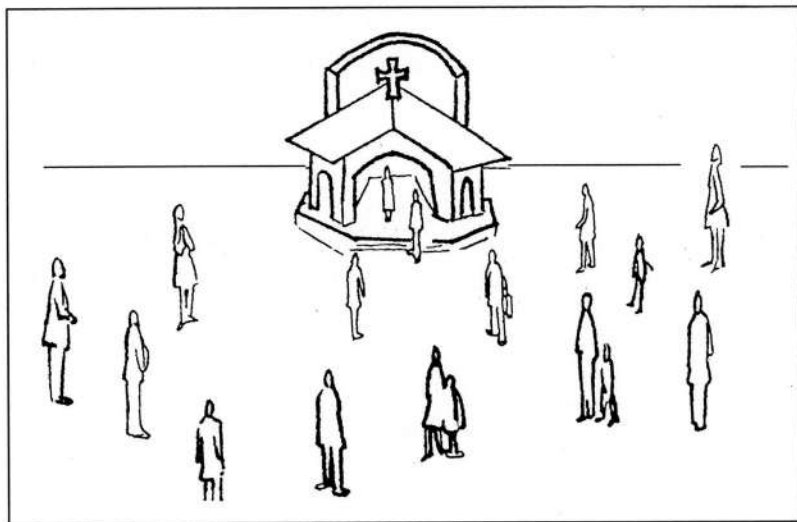
Questions:

- a. Give examples when you may have felt that we neglect Christ in our Church activities.—***
- b. What is your dream of a “New Way of Being Church”?—***
- c. What do we find in the following texts that tell us about the “New Way of Being Church”?—***

TEXTS:

- *In the new way of being Church* we try to bring Christ back into the centre of all Church activities. For instance, in gospel sharing the word of God becomes a sign of the “quasi sacramental presence of the Risen Lord”. (FABC5, Art.8)
- In a ‘participatory Church’ we want to participate first of all in Christ’s personal friendship and love. From this interior unity with Christ we participate in the ceremonies and rituals of the sacraments.

5. The parish is a 'Sunday congregation of individuals'



Questions:

- a. *Give examples where you have experienced yourself as an isolated "individual" at Sunday service.—*
- b. *What is your dream of a "New Way of Being Church"?—*
- c. *What do we find in the following texts that tell us about the "New Way of Being Church"?—*

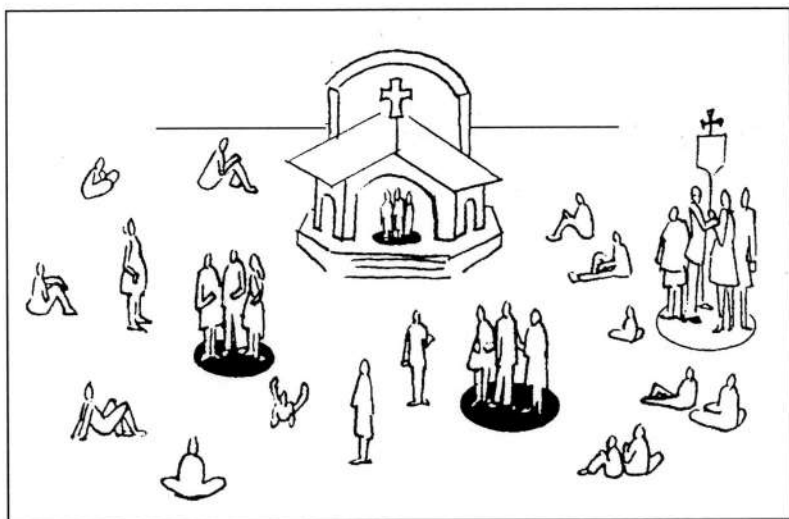
TEXTS:

- *In the new way of being Church Christians are "called together by the word of God.... to form small Christian communities". (FABC5, Art.8)*
- *It is vital to form "fully participatory Christian communities where people experience that they 'belong' and that together they are the Church... when they accept their share in the Church's mission." (FABC5, Art.3)*

- In small Christian communities the faithful “pray and share 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’”. (FABC5, Art.8)

6. The 'task-group Church'

In a 'task-group Church' most members of the Church remain passive, although many committees and task-groups may be busy in the parish.



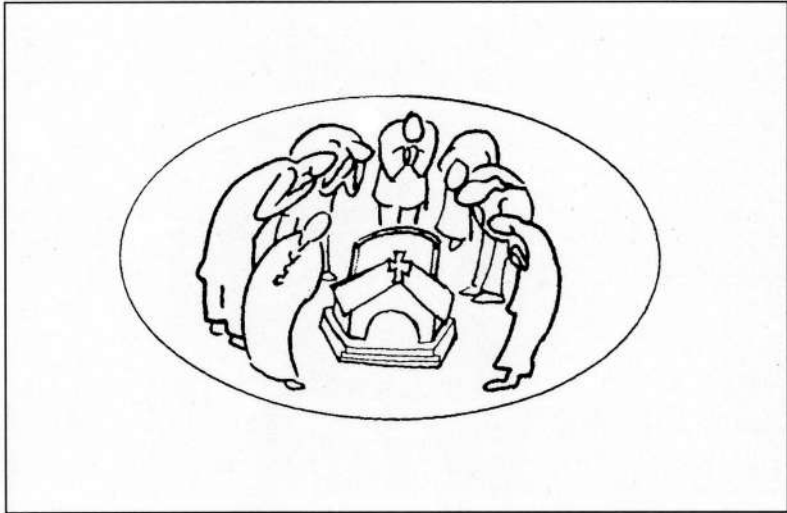
Questions:

- a. *Give examples where you have experienced lots of activities in the parish and yet only a few are actively involved.—*
- b. *What is your dream of a “New Way of Being Church”?—*
- c. *What do we find in the following texts that tell us about the “New Way of Being Church”?—*

TEXTS:

- *The new way of being Church* is a “participatory Church where the gifts that the Holy Spirit gives to all the faithful - lay, Religious and cleric alike - are recognized and activated...” (FABC5, Art. 8)
- Busy committees and organizations in a parish may “recognize and activate” up to 10% of the gifts and talents of the Christian community. The rest, however, still remain passive and uninvolved

7. The 'inward looking' Church



Questions:

- a. *Give examples where you have personally experienced Christians who were concerned only with themselves not seeing the needs of others.—*
- b. *What is your dream of a “New Way of Being Church”?—*
- c. *What do we find in the following texts that tell us about the “New Way of Being Church”?—*

TEXTS:

- *In the new way of being Church* the Christians look beyond the Church walls. They are called to continue Christ's mission to "proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed...." (FABC5, Art 4; Lk 4,18-19).
- The Christian community....must live in companionship, as true partners with all Asians as they pray, work, struggle and suffer for a better human life..." (FABC5, Art.6)

B. A SUMMARY OF OUR VISION

In our drawing on the following pages 18 & 19 we have tried to depict some major features of the Church which we are dreaming of.

In this exercise we want to summarize for ourselves what we have discovered already.

1. The whole group looks at the drawing on pages 18 & 19

- Discuss the question in the whole group.

Question:

What important features of a “participatory Church” do we find in this drawing?—

Supplement:

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

- In a participatory Church all the faithful, both cleric and lay people participate in Christ’s life and mission.
- In a participatory Church we talk first of our common mission as Christians and then of the different callings of clergy and laity.
- All the faithful celebrate their participation in the life of Christ and his mission by celebrating the Eucharist together.
- Small Christian Communities are one of the best means of participating in Christ’s mission in a certain neighbourhood.

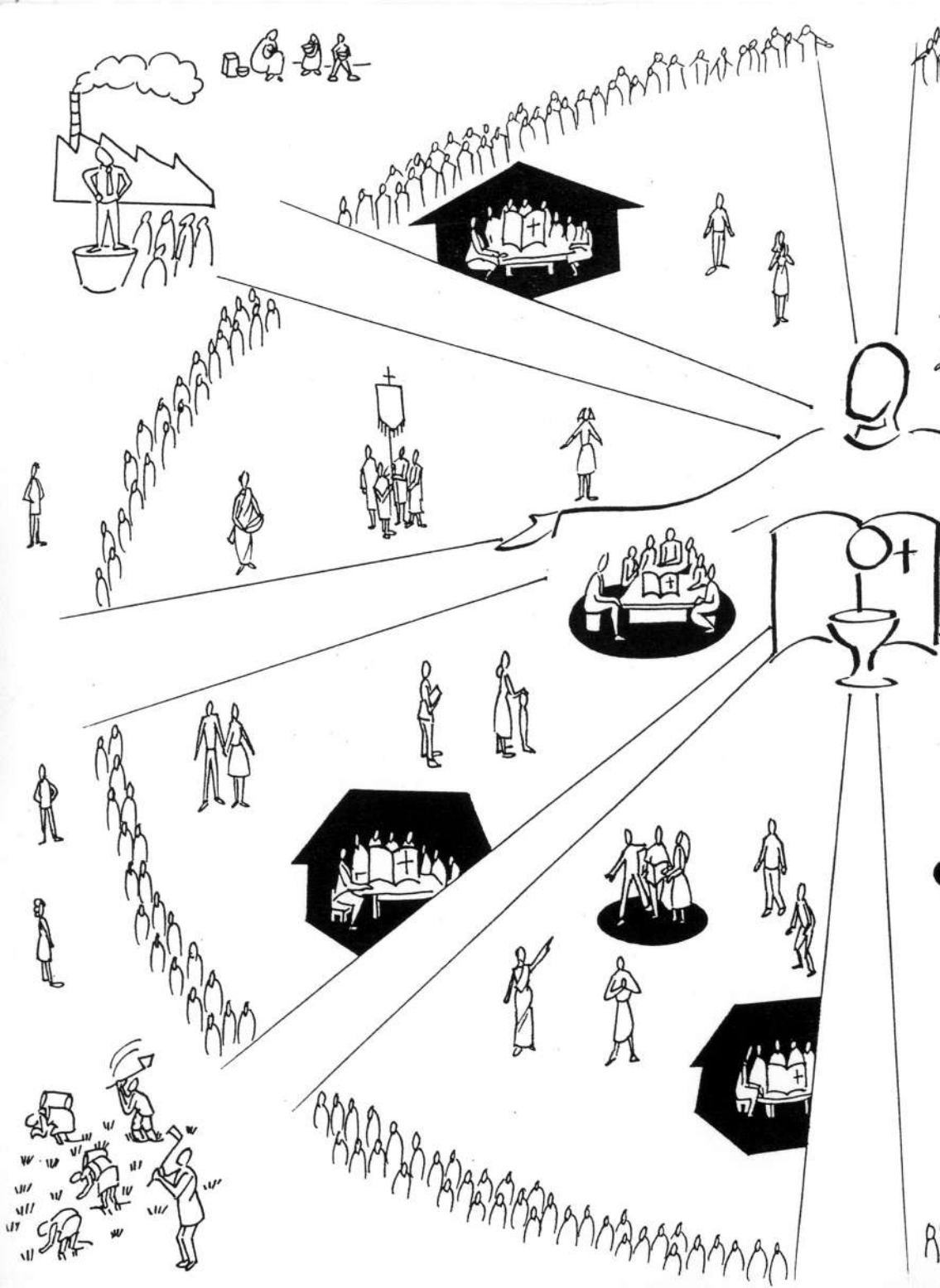
- Some Church organizations and committees participate in the interior life of the parish, others take part in our common mission to the world beyond the parish walls.
- The Parish Pastoral Council consists of members of Small Christian Communities and other groups. They do not only ‘administer’ the parish but ask themselves, “What does Christ want us to do in this parish here and now?”
- The whole parish community is a sign to the world of a new society where people can live together in peace, forgive each other, work together, praise God and make him visible to the world.
- Pastoral planning in a participatory Church is guided by two considerations:
 - a) Are our activities Christ centred?
 - b) Do our pastoral activities involve the community and build up the community?
- The full-time pastoral workers understand themselves as “enablers” who inspire, train and accompany those who participate and feel co-responsible in the mission of the local Church.

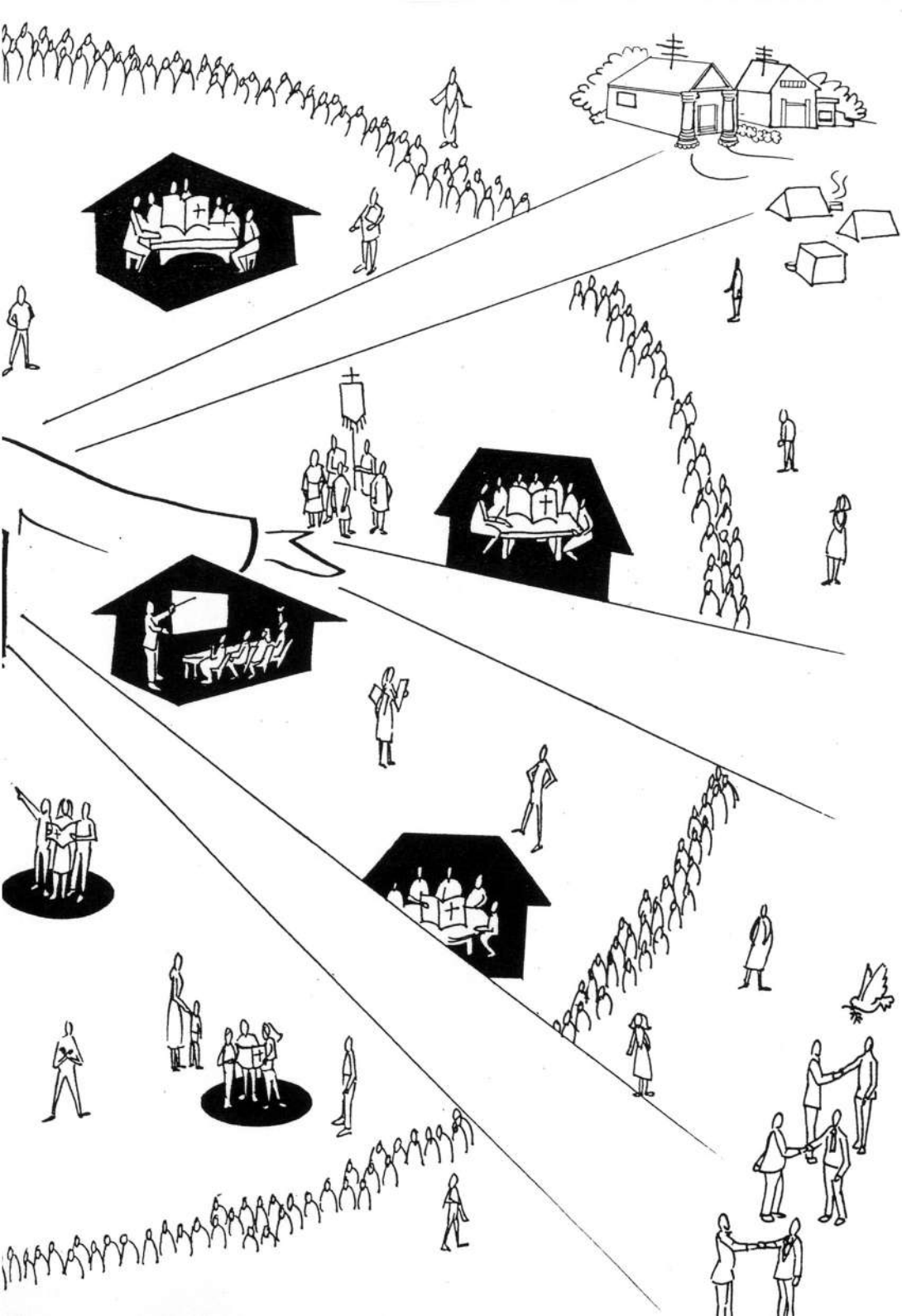
CONCLUSION

- Discuss in small groups of 5/8
- Report after 15 minutes

Questions:

- *What may be the most serious block to implementing a ‘participatory Church’ in our parish? —*
- *How can we possibly face it? What can we do about it? —*





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."
