

B: Small Christian Communities

C\8

SCCs BUILD 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**
- E: SPIRITUAL FORMATION**
- F: FORMATION AND TRAINING OF LEADERS**

AsIPA C: A Participatory Church

Formation for the Christian Community

C\8

SCCs Build a Participatory Church

Prepare beforehand

- Two relevant statements from the Bishops Conference of your own country under Part C below.
- Duration required about one hour and half.

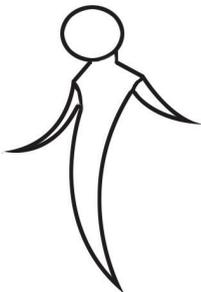
The Aim:

To discover that through the structure of the SCCs we can renew the whole parish as “a participatory Church” so that all faithful become “branches bearing much fruit”.

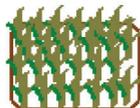
Introduction

The parishes by and large seem to be contented with the participation of a few people, especially with those who are in the associations and ministries, taking active part in the pastoral activities of the parish. Whereas Vatican Council II gives a call that all the members of God’s faithful need to participate in the life of the Church. This session deals with this need for participation by all.

A. Parable:



Farmer



25 Plants



1000 Plants

There was a farmer. He had a farm. In this farm he planted 1000 precious plants. After about a couple of months, he realizes that there are so many things to do and he cannot manage to take care of all the plants. He makes a plan of action. These are the various options that come to his mind.

- a) *To revive the whole plot. It requires watering, putting manure, applying pesticides etc. It is a difficult process.*
- b) *To leave it as it is. Allow providence to take its own course. This is easy. However all may die.*
- c) *Near his house there is a small fertile place. Remove 25 good plants. Plant them in this field. Take care of only this field and forget about the original field and the rest of the plants.*

The farmer follows this third option. He transplants 25 plants only. He gives these plants all his care and attention. He does not make any effort towards the remaining 975 plants. To all visitors he shows only the field of 25 plants. People regard him as a good farmer. As a matter of fact he gets an award for being a good and efficient farmer.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION: (15 minutes)

- a) *What do you think of this farmer? Do you approve of his action? Why?*
- b) *Is something similar happening in our parish - Apply this story and identify :*
 - *the farm and 1000 plants*
 - *the farmer*
 - *the 25 plants and the small plot*
- c) *What would you have done if you were the farmer?*

Supplement

- *The farmer seems to have forgotten his original purpose.*
- *He is negligent. He follows the easy way.*
- *He forgets that the entire field, with all the 1000 precious plants, belongs to him.*
- *He is after name and fame.*
- *He is highly irresponsible.*
- *All the 1000 plants in a parish represent Gods people.*
- *It is Gods field. God has entrusted the field to the farmer.*
- *Till Vat II the general understanding was that only the parish priest is responsible for the pastoral care of the people.*
- *Today we can say that it is the Parish Pastoral Council that is responsible.*
- *However the priests are full time pastoral workers, ordained solely for this task.*
- *The other members of the PPC are part timers. Their full time responsibility is in their family. Then their next area would be their neighbourhood. There after along with the parish priest they become coworkers for the whole parish.*

- *Taking care of only the 25 plants, giving all attention to this small plot is reflected in our associations or ministries.*
- *The members of the associations are considered better Christians and they also think that they are 'better than the rest'. The vast majority of the parishioners remain as mere spectators. They have become dormant or non-participatory.*

B. HOW DO THESE FOLLOWING TEXTS REFER TO THE SCCS AND WHAT CAN WE DO ABOUT IT?

(After number 12 below add the selected two relevant statements from the Bishops Conference of your own country.)

1. "...the son of man has come to seek out and save what was lost." (Lk. 19.10)
2. "... where two or three come together in my name, I am there with them." (Mt 18.20)
3. "I am the real vine, and my Father is the gardener....Remain united to me,A branch can not bear fruit by itself..." (Jn 15:1-4)
4. "The group of believers was one in mind and heart they all shared with one another every thing they had.....There was no one in the group who was in need." (Acts 4. 32-34)
5. "Christ is like a single body, which has many parts; it is still one body, even though it is made up of different parts. In the same way, all of us,...." (1 Cor 12:12-13)
6. "...he appointed some to be apostles, others to be prophets, others to be evangelists, others to be pastors and teachers.Under his control all the different parts of the body fit together ..." (Ephesians 4:11-16)
7. "It has pleased God to make man holy and save them not merely as individuals without any mutual bonds but by making them into a single people." (Vatican II Lumen Gentium no 9.)
8. "The Basic Ecclesial Communities are a sign of vitality, within the Church, an instrument of formation and evangelization, and a solid point for a new society based on 'civilization of love'" (R.M. art 51)
9. "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." (FABC Bandung, 1990.
10. "These small groups help the faithful to live as believing, praying and loving communities like the early communities. They aim to help their members to live the Gospel in a spirit of fraternal love and service,...." (Ecclesia in Asia no. 25)

11. "The small Christian communities, in whatever form they can be constituted, can serve as powerful means in creating this sense of mission, for it is there that the Christians can come to grips with the concrete evangelizing need of the community of which they are a part. These communities are like living cells of an organism fully operative and contributing towards the wellbeing and growth of the whole body. It is necessary that we foster their creation and growth in all our parishes. (CBCI 1998, INDIA- Varanasi no.3.2)

12. In order to make Jesus' vision a reality, we recommend very strongly that the basic structure of the Church in India is to be a communion of communities and for this Small/Basic Christian Communities must be formed in every parish..... Given the great potential, which they have to build up authentic local churches with a sense of mission, let the Episcopal bodies in India take it as a priority in their pastoral animation of the Church to build up these Small Christian Communities. Thus our parishes will function as bodies in which all the living cells will be fully alive and operative. (THE MESSAGE TO THE CHURCH FROM THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY- INDIA. Year 2000. No. 44.)

C. CONCLUSION

QUESTION for Small Group Work

What do these texts say about the need to take care of all Gods people? Please explain.

1. 5-6 in small groups.
2. Allot one text from the scripture, one from the teaching of the Church and one from the Bishops conference of your country.
3. Time 20 minutes.
4. Report to the whole group

Supplement

- The Small Christian Community way makes efforts to revive the entire field or the whole parish.
- The SCCs are basic. It should be the normal way for a parish to take care of all its members. The associations are founded for special tasks and are optional.
- The SCCs are responsible for the total mission of the Church in the neighbourhood. The associations however fulfil certain charisms or tasks.

After the reporting conclude with spontaneous prayer and a hymn

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."