



D: TRAINING FOR PARISH TEAMS

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IN SEARCH OF A PASTORAL FOCUS

TOPICS OF AsIPA TEXTS:

A : GOSPEL SHARING

B : SMALL CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES

C : A PARTICIPATORY CHURCH

D : TRAINING FOR PARISH TEAMS

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AsIPA D: PASTORAL PLANNING AND
OUR STYLE OF LEADERSHIP
Programmes for Training the Christian Community

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IN SEARCH OF A PASTORAL FOCUS

INTRODUCTION

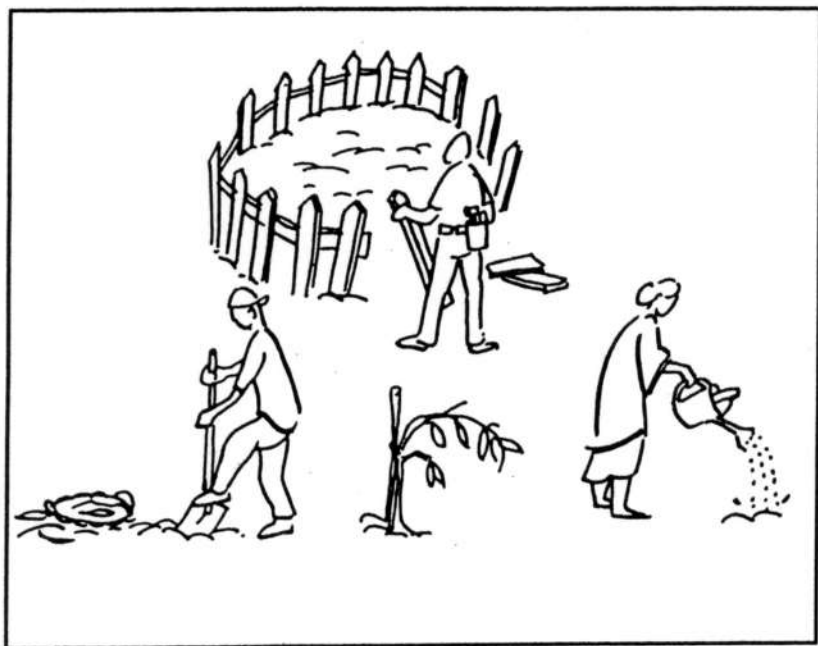
Many committed co-workers in the parish wonder, "What is the purpose of our work in church? Many things are happening in the community but where are we going? Is there direction in our work in the parish? An overall plan to take part in? A center or focus towards which our activities are orientated?"

Today we would like to look for such a focus in our work in the parish and make some concrete suggestions.

The PASTORAL MIRROR which we shall introduce at the end of our session will help us to find a centre and direction for our parish activities. Such activities can be of any type like preparing children for First Communion or Confirmation or organising the parish feast.

A. THE "GARDENER FAMILY" AND OUR "CHURCH FAMILY"

The "Gardener family" has planted a precious fruit tree. All try to nurture it and protect it from danger.



Questions:

- *What went wrong with the "Gardener family"? --*
- *Where do you find a similar situation in the activities of our "Church family"?--*

B. IN SEARCH OF A 'FOCUS' FOR OUR PARISH ACTIVITIES

We are looking for a “focus” or “center” by which ALL our parish activities receive direction and value. Such a “focus” should:

- Contain the core-message of the Second Vatican Council;
- Be applicable to ALL parish activities.

**1. As a first attempt we should like to formulate a
“Pastoral Focus” in these words:**

FROM THE CHRIST-CENTER
WE BECOME COMMUNITY
SO AS TO CARRY ON
OUR COMMON KINGDOM-MISSION

2. Our “Pastoral focus” and church documents

☞ *Form small groups of 2/3*

- Read the texts below and discuss the question.
- Try to re-formulate our “Pastoral Focus” in your own words being inspired by these texts..
- Report after 10 minutes.

Question:

- *Compare each of the following texts with our Pastoral focus:*

*“From the Christ-Center
we become community
so as to carry on
our common Kingdom-Mission.”*

- (1) “You can do nothing without me!” (John 15,5)
- (2) “As the Father sent me, so am I sending you.”
(John 20,21)
- (3) “Repent! The kingdom of God is at hand!”
(Mk 1,15)
- (4) “With the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in Baptism and Confirmation, the baptized share in the same mission of Jesus as the Christ, the Saviour /Messiah.” (Laity, CL,13)
- (5) “The Church has been set up by Christ as a communion of life, love and truth; by him too it is taken up as the instrument of salvation of all, and sent on a mission to the whole world as the light of the world and salt of the

earth.” (The Church, LG 13)

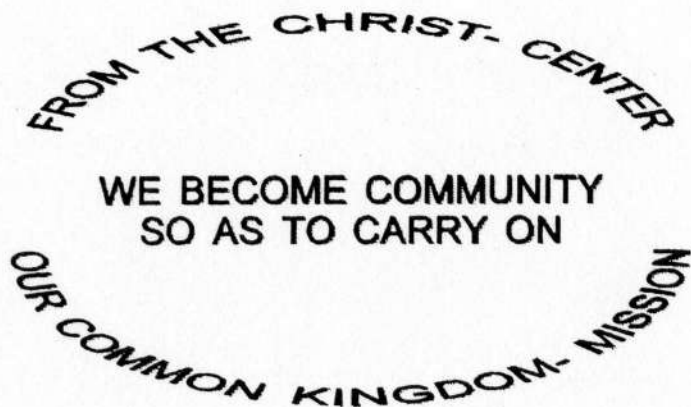
- (6) “Those who sincerely accept the Good News ... , therefore gather together in Jesus’ name in order to seek together the Kingdom, build it up and live it. They make up a community which is in its turn evangelizing. The command to the Twelve to go out and proclaim the Good News is also valid for every Christian, though in a different way.”
(Evangelization in the Modern World, EN,13)
- (7) “There is thus a profound link between Christ, the Church and evangelization.” (EN, 16)
- (8) “The understanding of Church (ecclesiology) as a *community* is a central and fundamental concept in the documents of the Second Vatican Council.” (Laity, CL, 19)

C. APPLYING THE ‘PASTORAL FOCUS’ IN THE ‘PASTORAL MIRROR’

The “Pastoral Mirror” on pages 6 and 7 can help us to examine parish activities according to our “Pastoral Focus”.

- ✎ Read the “Pastoral Mirror” in the whole group in order to acquaint yourselves with its content.

PASTORAL MIRROR



1. **How can we make Christ the “Center” of this parish activity?**
 - What can we do to make the risen Lord the inspiring force of this parish activity?
 - What activity in the life of Christ corresponds to this parish activity?
 - What can we do so that the faithful experience more deeply the presence of Christ in this activity?
 - How can we show, in this parish activity, the “Kingdom Way” of doing things - different from the mere “efficient” way of the world?

- Who is served or helped by this parish activity? Church-goers alone?
- Are we concerned with improving social conditions for the whole neighbourhood?
- Does this activity require us to be concerned with the conservation of nature?

2. How can we involve and build the community through this activity?

- Is the community convinced that this activity answers a real need?
- How can we make the community more deeply aware of their co-responsibility for this particular activity?
- How can we motivate as many as possible in the community to take an energetic part in this activity?
- How can we include existing church-groups in this activity without just "making use" of them or "exploiting" their good will?
- How can we train co-operators for this task, for the future, too?
- How can we introduce co-operators to the whole community, thanking and encouraging them?

D. Practicing “pastoral planning” with the help of the “Pastoral Mirror”

Example:

1. Planning the preparation of First Holy Communion

- ☛ *Form groups of 3//4*
Report after 15 minutes

Regard yourselves as members of the preparation team for guiding children to their First Holy Communion. Consult the “Pastoral Mirror” (pages 5&6) when discussing the questions below:

Questions:

- (1) *What can we do to help parents, catechists and children experience the risen Lord during this time of preparation and at the celebration of First Holy Communion itself? --*
- (2) *How can we activate the responsibility of the whole community in the process of preparing the children for First Holy Communion and in the celebration itself?--*

**Supplement:****(1) *How to help children experience Christ:***

- We can celebrate gospel sharing with the catechists using the same biblical texts which we use with the children during their sessions.
- We can help parents prepare with their children by suggesting special “meals” in the home and sharing of their faith.
- We can celebrate house-masses with small groups of parents and children in order to help them experience fellowship with Christ in the center.
- We can celebrate para-liturgical services with the children using gestures, symbols, drama and hymns, in order to give them an experience of Christ as the center and to give an experience of belonging together in him.

(2) *How to involve and build up community*

- We can introduce the children to the whole parish community well before the actual celebration.
- Members of the congregation can be invited to express their joy that the children will be accepted at the common table of God’s family.
- The whole congregation can be helped to understand the Eucharist as Christ’s sacrifice in the form of a family meal.

- Neighborhood groups can invite the children in their respective areas to join them in their meeting. They can share with them their own appreciation of the Eucharist and holy communion.
- After the celebration of First Holy Communion the neighborhoods can invite the children in their respective areas for house-masses followed by a fellowship meal (Agape).

Apply the "Pastoral Mirror" to any parish activity which you plan in the parish.

You can apply the "Pastoral Mirror" even for planning a special collection of funds!

Not all questions raised in the "Pastoral Mirror" may be applicable each and every time.

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."
