

D: TRAINING FOR PARISH TEAMS

D\2

Training Parish Teams to conduct 'Awareness Programmes' (AP) for the Sunday Liturgy and the Parish Hall

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: TRAINING FOR PARISH TEAMS
(Pastoral Leaders)

D\2

TRAINING PARISH TEAMS TO CONDUCT AWARENESS PROGRAMMES (AP) FOR THE SUNDAY LITURGY OR FOR THE PARISH HALL

Prepare Beforehand:

Copies of AsIPA text C\6 for participants, Bibles (part B)

Introduction:

The “New Way of Being Church” does not mean a few more parish activities or a rapid increase of active members in Church organisations or ministries.

The “new way” needs a new vision of church, a deeper understanding of our Christian calling, a wider horizon for the mission of church today.

Such a vision or deeper understanding can not be just “taught”. Rather, it has to be “caught” by the people themselves.

This is the reason why “Awareness Programmes” (APs) should be the first step towards a “new way of being church” where all the faithful feel co-responsible for carrying on the mission of Christ.

Part A (the story of Fr. Cosmas) will help us to discover why and where we need a new awareness in our parish communities. Part B will introduce us into the “structure “ of APs. In part C we learn how to make our own AP for the Sunday liturgy to answer our local needs.

A. WHY DO WE NEED AWARENESS PROGRAMMES?

1. How Fr. Cosmas tried to change and renew his parish.

For many years, Father Anthony was the parish priest of St. Michael’s. He nearly killed himself doing everything himself for the people. He visited the sick, taught catechism, helped the poor, greeted the newcomers to the parish, organized the parish feast etc. etc. Sometimes he allowed some people to help him, especially as he grew older.

One day, however, Fr. Anthony was transferred by the bishop. Fr. Cosmas succeeded him as parish priest. Fr. Cosmas soon realized that he could never do all the work himself like Fr. Anthony, especially because the bishop asked him to look after

the local hospital and the prison as well. Therefore, one Sunday, Fr. Cosmas delivered a thundering sermon:

“Dear people!” he said. “Things must change in this parish. We have to adopt a new way of being church. For this reason, I have divided the parish into zones. In each zone people should meet in small neighbourhood groups, they should read the bible, pray and work together. In this way you yourselves can look after the sick and welcome strangers.

I call for volunteers to come forward and act as leaders of such groups. I will train these leaders myself. Our first training session will be on Wednesday evening. I am sure, you will not disappoint me. Amen.”

2. We reflect on the approach of Fr. Cosmas.

☛ *Discuss in the whole group:*

Questions:

- *What do you think about the approach of Fr. Cosmas? What other approaches could he have used? --*
- *What style of leadership did Fr. Cosmas exercise? --*


Supplement:

- Fr. Cosmas exercised "dominating" leadership: He decided everything on his own and treated the people like children - just telling them what to do. People must have felt "organized" and pushed around.



- Fr. Cosmas did not share with his parishioners the deeper reasons why they should now meet in small neighbourhood groups. The mere practical reasons for small communities which Fr. Cosmas gave, will scarcely create inner conviction and commitment or motivate parishioners to co-operate with him.
- The way in which Fr. Cosmas promoted small communities was contrary to the “new way of being a church”.
 - Even if the people respond, they may not have personal conviction and it may not last.
 - Fr. Cosmas should first have shared the new vision of church by offering “awareness programmes”.

3. Areas in which the parish of St. Michael would need a “new awareness”.

 *Discuss in the whole group*

Questions:

- *What opinions and attitudes of the Christians in St. Michael’s parish would need a “new awareness”?-- (Find concrete examples how the “old way” shows itself in different situations in the parish for which a new awareness is needed.)*

Supplement:

(Each of the following areas may be used as a topic for awareness programmes to be conducted during the Sunday liturgy or in the parish hall.)



- 1) The church is not a “service station” where the faithful are merely provided with spiritual goods. Rather: The church is a community where all are called and sent to continue Christ’s mission in the world.
- 2) The church is not a mere “Sunday congregation of individuals”. Rather: The church is a community of sisters and brothers who take an active part in the mission of the church.
- 3) The Church is not only a “Sunday assembly”. Small Christian communities offer a new vision of church in the neighbourhood.
- 4) Christ did not found the church so that the faithful can look after themselves only and wait for heaven. Christ called his disciples to change the world - according to his “kingdom plan”.
- 5) In a number of church activities Christ may be effectively excluded. The disciples of Christ, however, should make Christ present in all activities and allow others to experience him.
- 6) It is not the task of the priests and bishops alone to “read the signs of the time” and find out what God wants us to do today. By using scripture individually and in small groups all the faithful can take part in searching for God’s will for us today.
- 7) Leadership in the church should not be a commanding and dominating leadership. The vision of a participatory,

community church needs a directive, guiding, enabling and inspiring leadership. This applies to all leaders in the church, not only to the priest!

- 8) Those who take an active part in the church are co-workers and partners, not mere “helpers” of the leader.
- 9) To take part in the activities of the church does not depend on education and appointments only. All the baptized have received the gifts of the Spirit in order to make Christ’s body (church) alive and active.

4. Practise ready made awareness programmes

Now, use the ready-made APs in AsIPA texts D\3, D\4 and D\5. They offer a general introduction into the “New Way of Being Church” and show you different ways to conduct APs for the Sunday liturgy.

Only after practising D\3, D\4 & D\5, we suggest you continue with part B and C of this booklet and prepare your own AP.

Distribute Bibles for Part B if you are continuing.

B. THE STRUCTURE OF 'AWARENESS PROGRAMMES'

1. The "awareness programme" of the prophet Nathan

A famous example of an "awareness programme" is the story of king David and the prophet Nathan in the bible. Let us remember what happened:

King David made Bathsheba pregnant, she was the beautiful wife of the soldier Uriah. He could not cover up his affair with Bathsheba so he had Uriah killed in order to marry Bathsheba.

Let us now listen to the story and note how the prophet made David aware of his sin as well as of God's mercy!

Read: 2 Samuel 12, verses 1-7 and verse 13
(*Read the text twice and dramatize it!*)

☞ *Discuss in the whole group:*

Question:

- *What are the main stages or "steps" in the approach of Nathan, dealing with a very delicate matter? –*

Supplement:

We can detect the following "stages" in Nathan's approach in his effort to make King David "aware" of his sin:



- 1) Nathan raises the problem in a story (12,1-4).
- 2) The king is led to admit: "Something is wrong here!" (12,5-6).
- 3) The prophet helps the king to see himself reflected in the story : "You are the man!"(12,7).
- 4) The prophet presents a new vision to David: "God, for his part, forgives your sins" (12,13).

2. Scheme for preparing awareness programmes

Inspired by Nathan's approach we suggest the following "Scheme" for preparing our own awareness programmes for the Sunday liturgy or in the parish hall.

☛ In the whole group:

- Take turns to read the "Scheme for Preparing Awareness Programmes" on the following page.
- Then: Open AsIPA text C\6, pages 2-15. Compare the 7 short awareness programmes offered there with the steps in our "Scheme for Preparing Awareness Programmes."

SCHEME FOR PREPARING AWARENESS PROGRAMMES

① Raise the problem in a 'code'.

Think of a role play, a poster, a story etc.

1a. Help the faithful to discover the code

- What did you observe?
- What is the problem?
- Do we have a similar problem in our parish?
- What are the reasons for having this problem?

② Offer a new vision

- Present suitable texts from scripture which can throw light on our situation.
- Prepare a shared homily, highlighting the message.
- Or present a new vision on a poster.
- Or people from another parish give a report

③ Present the challenge of the new vision

- Compare our own problem and situation with the new vision we have received.
- Invite suggestions of how to improve our life in the parish in the light of the new vision.

④ Let the topic direct the whole celebration

- Prepare: Introductions: opening, penitential rite, preface, Our Father, sign of peace, dismissal.
- Responsorial psalm, acclamation, petitions,
- Hymns, posters.

C. HOW TO MAKE OUR OWN AWARENESS PROGRAMMES

1. “Golden opportunities” for APs

A new awareness can never be enforced or simply “taught”! People must feel a need first and ask questions. Therefore, we must wait for a “golden opportunity” before we can present an AP. For instance:

- there was no service, because the priest was sick;
- children could not be prepared properly for First Holy Communion;
- a pastoral letter of the bishop gives a suggestion;
- the parish prepares the patron feast.

When such situations arise, an AP could be offered in the parish hall or during the Sunday liturgy.

The end product of an AP is not an “action programme”. People should feel free to accept or reject the new vision and not get the impression that they are manipulated into a “new way” of doing things. APs in principle remain open-ended.

2. The “problem raiser” or “CODE”

Perhaps the most difficult task in preparing an awareness programme, is to raise the problem in a short and effective “problem raiser” or “CODE”. Therefore, our first task is to learn how to create a CODE.

a) What is a good “problem-raiser” or CODE?

 *In whole group:*

We open AsIPA text C\6, page 8.

The drawing on this page is called a “problem raiser” or CODE.

This CODE raises the problem: We Christians effectively exclude Christ from many church activities.

We look at this code and discuss:

Question:

- *When can we say that a code is a good one?--*




Supplement:


A code is good if it fulfills four basic demands:

1. A CODE raises only ONE problem.
2. A CODE does NOT give the answer.
3. A CODE is SHORT.
4. A CODE is CLEAR.
5. If we want to raise a delicate matter, the CODE should be “remote” in order not to arouse personal emotions.

b) A CODE can be a drawing, a drama, a story, a song, a newspaper report etc.

 *In the whole group:*

Discover the meaning of some of the 7 different codes presented in AsIPA text C\6, pages 2-15.

 *In small groups of 4/6:*

Each group is assigned a different code taken from one of the 7 examples in C\6, pages 2-15.

Task:

- ***Make a different code for raising the same problem. (Remember the 5 rules for a good code.)***
- ***After 30 minutes:
Present your new code,
de-code it with the whole group.--***
- ***The whole group evaluates each new code.***

3. Make your own awareness programmes

- **Follow the “Scheme” on page 8.**
- **Remember details of AP in D\3,D\4 and D\5:**
e.g.
 - How posters etc. were prepared beforehand.
 - How the problem of life was captured in the CODE.
 - How the CODE was de-coded by asking questions.
 - How the new vision was presented.
 - What visual aids, posters, etc. were used.
 - How the congregation was involved in the process.
 - How the challenge of the new vision was presented.
 - How readings, hymns, the Responsorial Psalm and the Acclamation before the gospel were chosen according to the topic.
 - How the topic “guided” the whole liturgical situation, e.g. the introduction to the service; the penitential rite; the introduction to the readings; words before the dismissal.

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."
