

## **D: TRAINING FOR PARISH TEAMS**

### **D\5**

#### **The Focal Point of All our Parish Activities**

**(Third example of an Awareness Programme  
for the Sunday Liturgy)**

#### **TOPICS OF AsIPA TEXTS:**

**A : GOSPEL SHARING**

**B : SMALL CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES**

**C : A PARTICIPATORY CHURCH**

**D : TRAINING FOR PARISH TEAMS**

**Imprimatur:**

+ Joseph Ti-Kang, Archbishop of Taipei,  
December 8, 1996

**Copyright:**

AsIPA Desk, FABC

**Distributed by:**

AsIPA Desk, FABC  
34, Lane 32, Kuangfu, S.Road,  
Taipei, Taiwan (1052)  
Tel/Fax: [886]- 2-577 2007

AsIPA D: Training Parish Teams  
(Pastoral Leaders)

---

## D\5

### THE FOCAL POINT OF ALL OUR PARISH ACTIVITIES

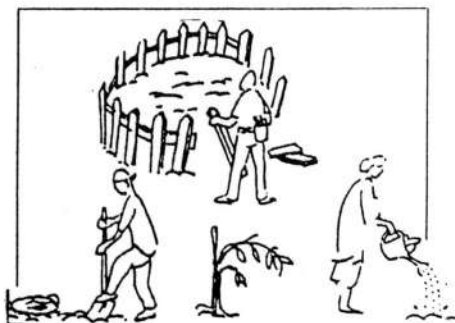
(Third example of an Awareness Programme  
for the Sunday liturgy)

Display in church before:

*Posters (in different languages, if  
needed):*

*From the*  
**CHRIST-CENTER**  
*we become*  
**COMMUNITY**  
*as to carry on our common*  
**CHRIST-MISSION**

**The FOCUS**  
○  
**of all our parish activities**



**People needed:**

Priest and two facilitators.

## **Introduction to the service and penitential rite**

**In the name of the Father.....**

**Welcome.....**

*(Priest)*

Our bishops want us to search for a “New Way of Being Church”. Or as Pope John Paul II puts it, the people around us should look at us and say, “Why are they like this? Why do they live in this way?” (Mission Sunday 1996)

We shall ask ourselves today, “What is this New Way of Being Church? Does it consist merely of some new activities in the parish? Or should this “new way” penetrate and guide all our parish activities?

My brothers and sisters! We have tried to summarize this “new way” in our “Focus of all our parish activities”. Look at the poster → □ :

“From the  
CHRIST-CENTER we become COMMUNITY  
so as to carry on our common  
CHRIST-MISSION.”

Let us begin our celebration by calling down on us the mercy of our loving God. We ask him to heal the painful wounds of the Church and restore us to the way of the gospel.

**Lord have mercy...**

**Glory to God...**

**Opening prayer...**

### **Introduction to the readings:**

*(1st facilitator, pointing at the poster → □ :)*

Here we see the Gardener family working hard! They work together to make a → tree grow!

All are busy. One → digs the ground - the other one is → watering - the other one → constructs a fence to protect the tree.

*(2nd facilitator:)*

But there is something wrong with the Gardener family! All work hard to make a tree grow! The tree should be the center of their interest, it should be their "focus of work". However, each one is working on his or her own and the tree is dying in spite of all the activities around it.

*(1st facilitator:)*

Let me pose a question:

Do we find a similar situation in our 'parish family'?

What is the focus of our many parish activities?

What is the center and direction of all that we try to do in the parish? Do we feel we are running in circles, at times?

Now let us listen to the first reading.

Paul helps us to find a focus for all our parish activities!

**1st Reading:**            **Philippians 2,1-5**

*Response (Cantor first , repeated by all:)*



**Responsorial hymn (Eph 1):**

1. Blessed be the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,  
Before the world was made,  
he chose us, chose us in Christ. **(R)**
2. He has let us know the mystery of his purpose,  
the hidden plan ,  
he so kindly made in Christ! **(R)**
3. Our life in Christ makes us strong,  
his love comforts us  
and makes us one in soul and mind! **(R)**

**Gospel acclamation:***(1st facilitator:)*

"We welcome and acclaim the risen Lord  
who is going to speak to us in the gospel!"

*(Cantor)*

**Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!**

"I will be with you always,  
to the end of the age!"

**Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!**

**Gospel:**

**Matthew 28, 16-20**

**Shared homily:***(2nd facilitator: asks the priest)*

"Father we are searching for a focus for all our parish activities! We do not want to be like the Gardener family running around in circles while the tree is dying! Where do we find such a focus in the readings of today? Can you help us?"

*(Priest:)***❶ St. Paul presents Christ as the strong focus of our lives:**

"Your life is in Christ" he says. "The attitude you should have is the one that Christ Jesus had!"

**Or remember the famous words of Jesus** at the very end of St. Matthew's gospel: "I am with you always; yes, to the end of time!"

That means:

Especially in our church activities Christ should be our focus. We should act from the Christ-Center, walking with Christ, consulting him, keeping Christ in our midst. "You can do nothing without me!" (Jn 15,5) Jesus tells us!

However, what do we often do? We proclaim Christ's resurrection at Easter - but bury him again after Easter! We act and work as if Christ is far away. We rely on our own clever plans! So our parish activities get out of focus like the work of the Gardener family!

Pope John Paul II explains well that Christ should be the focus of all that we do. Let us listen to his words:

*(1st facilitator:)*

The Pope says:

"A Christian is a person 'captured' by Christ! Our Christian witness is a 'copy', a 'sign' and a 'living radiation' of Jesus!...Let yourselves be personally called by the Lord!"

(Mission Sunday 1996):

*(2nd facilitator:)*

The different ways of gospel sharing are very practical means of keeping Christ as our focus. We make the risen Christ present in our neighbourhood groups and church committees by doing gospel sharing.

The basic gospel sharing method is the "7 Step way of gospel sharing."

*(We shall offer gospel sharing workshops in our parish to help you to facilitate gospel sharing and to experience its theological depth.)*



*(Priest:)*

**② Now we come to the second part of our focus for the  
“New Way of Being Church”:**

“From the Christ Center we become Community!”

**St. Paul** told us in the first reading: “Christ gives us fellowship with the Holy Spirit and with one another, sharing the same love, and being one in soul and mind!”

*(Let us sing again the Antiphon on page 4:*

*“Our life in Christ makes us one in soul and mind!”)*

To become community, belongs to our “New Way of Being Church”. Therefore, if our parish activities do not emerge from and involve our community, we are out of focus and may run around in circles like the Gardener family!!

Pope John Paul II regards the Small Christian Communities as a wonderful means of becoming a deeper community in Christ. Let us listen to him:

*(2nd facilitator:)*

The Pope says: “Small Christian Communities are a home for everyone! They are a concrete expression of Church! They are a sign of vitality within the Church, an instrument of formation and evangelization, and a solid starting point for a new society based on a ‘civilization of love’.

*(FC 85 and RM 51)*

*(Priest:)*

**③ The third essential part of our focus is:**

“To carry on our common Christ-Mission”.

In our gospel of today we see Christ standing on the hill-top pointing to all nations and boundaries of life, saying: “Go, make disciples! Teach them! Baptize them!” That means: Go and carry on my mission! “As the Father sent me, so I send you!” (Jn 20,21)

“To carry on the Christ-Mission” belongs to our “new way of being Church”! It is nothing else but the “gospel way of being Church!”

Again Pope John Paul II has powerful words to emphasize this focal point for our parish activities.

Let us listen to him:

*(1st facilitator:)*

The Pope says: Christians should be “witnesses of profound communion which reflects the life of God-Trinity; witnesses of shining faith, industrious, patient and loving charity of service for the manifold poverty of contemporary people.”

*(Priest:)*

Our chief pastor of the Church, John Paul II, reminds us of an important consequence of our Christ-mission in the world: We have to expect the cross. “Golgotha is the only way to resurrection!” he says.

What does the cross mean in practice for our large parish community or for our small Christian communities in the neighbourhood?

*(2nd facilitator:)*

It means, says the Pope:

“Going against the current,  
making choices according to God’s commandments  
despite... unpopularity;  
prophetically denouncing injustice, suppressed liberty,  
violated rights;  
having to live there where the Church is most attacked,  
obstructed and persecuted.”

*(Mission Sunday 1996)*

*(Priest:)*

My dear brothers and sisters!

This is the focus for our “new way of being Church”:

**(1) Making Christ the center of all our activities:**

Especially by making him present in our meetings through  
gospel sharing.

**(2) Becoming a Christ-centered community:**

Especially in our neighbourhood groups and small Christian  
communities.

**(3) Carrying on our common Christ-Mission**

in our daily work,  
in our families,  
in our small Christian communities,

parish committees,  
in public life  
and in our church services.

May the Lord help us not to get out of focus!  
Amen.

### **Petitions:**

*(1st and 2nd facilitator:)*

**1st:** Father in heaven, help us to experience Christ as the center of our celebration today! Inspire us with his spirit of joy, co-operation and love! ---  
*Let us pray to the Lord!*

**2nd:** We thank you Father for showing us the "gospel way of being church"! Help us to grow together as loving communities in our Parish Council, in our parish committees and in our SCCs.---  
*Let us pray to the Lord!*

**1st:** Great and wonderful God! You have called us! Send us out! We are ready to go!  
Help us to carry on the mission of your Son Jesus- in loving unity with our brothers and sisters!  
*Let us pray to the Lord!*

*(People from the congregation are invited now to voice their petitions, even in different languages!)*

**Before the “Lord I am not worthy....”**

*(Priest:)*

“This is Jesus, the focus and aim of our lives.  
Happy are we who are chosen and sent by him!  
Lord I am not worthy.....”

**Before the blessing:**

*(1st facilitator:)*

My dear brothers and sister!

*(Our parish team will offer special workshops for learning gospel sharing and a deeper understanding of Small Christian Communities. We would like to share with you this vision. Then you can decide on your own what you would like to do to come closer to the ‘New Way of Being Church’.)*

Let us now ask the Lord’s blessing that we can put into practice our Pastoral Focus for all parish activities:

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



# 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-negral -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."

---