

E: Spiritual Formation

E\1

“You will be my witnesses.”

(Acts 1:8)

Adapted from Lumko No. 15M&P

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 E: Community Training Series

Spiritual Formation of Leaders

E\1

“You will be my witnesses”

Prepare beforehand:

Newsprint

Bibles for all participants

Copies of this text

Introduction

In this session we would like to understand what it means to be a witness of Christ, and why leaders must be such witnesses.

You are all most welcome. Please introduce yourselves to each other if you do not know the person sitting beside you.

Some of us are parish councillors, others are asked to visit the sick, or to facilitate gospel sharing in our Small Christian Communities, or to lead justice and reconciliation groups, to conduct Sunday services or to render some other service to the community or society. We differ in the tasks we fulfil, but we have some things in common. We are all Christians. However different our roles may be, they will always be a role of service and witness.

We want to understand in this session what the command of our Lord means for us: “You will be my witnesses”.

Step 1. BIBLE MEDITATION

1. Sing a hymn.
2. Read Acts: 1: 6-8.
3. Pause in silence
4. Someone please read this short meditation.

Bible meditation

“You will be my witnesses – what might Peter have thought when he heard these words?”

“What did the tax-collector Mathew feel when he heard: you will be my witnesses?”

...

"What fears may have arisen in the disciples when they heard they should be Christ's witnesses?"...

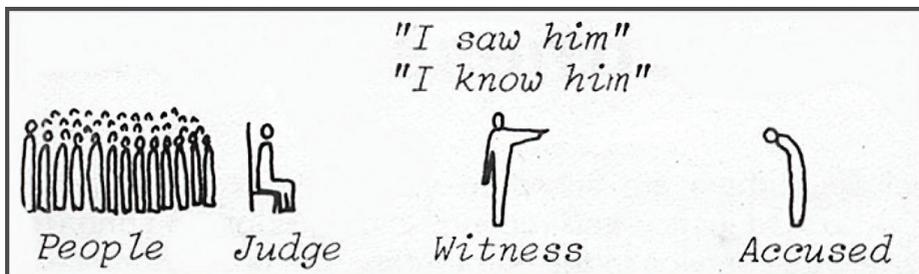
"What doubts may have entered the minds of the apostles, when they were told that they should be Christ's witnesses?" ...

"Lord, help us to become your witnesses." ...

5. Let us sing a hymn to the Holy Spirit.

Step 2 WHAT IS A "WITNESS" IN DAILY LIFE?

1. Facilitator to ask: What comes to our mind when we hear or use the word "Witness" in daily life? ...
2. Let us read Deut. 19:15-20.
3. We share our experiences at court or at offices when we were called to witness.
4. Let us summarise our understanding of a witness with a drawing like the one below.

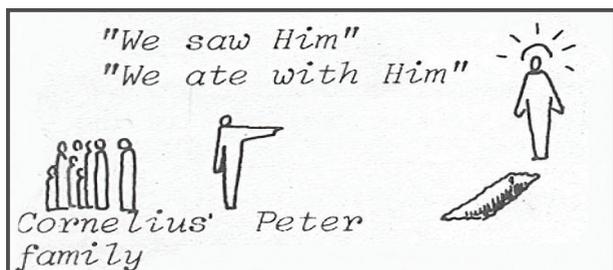


(A witness can only give testimony to something which he himself saw or heard)

5. Now we ask ourselves: "Who can act as a witness?" (write it on newsprint or on a whiteboard) It is obvious that a judge could not call just anybody to act as a witness.
6. In a short sentence what kind of persons can act as a witness in daily life. ... write on the newsprint provided.
7. Look at our answers, which are the most important?

Step 3 WHAT IS A "WITNESS OF CHRIST"?

1. Let us read Acts 10:39-43.
2. We discuss: How was Peter a witness in this case? ...
3. Let us make a drawing which shows the witness-role of Peter:



Supplement

Peter bore witness to the family of Cornelius. He testified that he had himself seen that Christ had been raised to New Life.

4. Work in small groups of 3-4 persons for 40 minutes.
 - a. Let us take one of the following texts,
 - b. Study the text, reflect what the word "witness" or "testimony" means in these texts, and express it in a drawing. If you have time, work on a second text.
 - c. Report back to the whole group

Who was the witness?

What did he say?

Or to what did he testify?

Mt: 26:60-61

Acts: 6.13

Acts 1.22

Acts10:39,43

Rev.1:5

John 8.381

John1:1-5

Note to facilitators:

In the report back we check especially whether Rev 1:5 was correctly understood and well expressed in a drawing. If necessary we try to make a better drawing together. It is important to realize that Christ himself is a witness to the Father. We are witnesses with him and in him, and we are also witnesses to him.

Step 4. HOW CAN WE "SEE" AND "KNOW" GOD?

We have realised that we can only witness to somebody whom we know or whom we have seen. Therefore the question arises how we Christians of today can bear

witness to Christ who lived long ago. Or can we really say that we know him? Can we really say that we saw him?

Note to facilitators:

Write on the newsprint the two sentences "I know God" and "I see him". Below these sentences display some photo cuttings from magazines, showing men and women of today. Select photos with which the leaders could identify. When the photos are displayed under the texts, do not comment yourself but ask the group what they think: can Christians of today say "I know God?" Can they even say "I see him"? Allow all kinds of opinions and invite opposition to them.



Let us study a few Scripture texts.

Work in the whole group. Read the text together and read the explanation and get a few answers to the questions.

John 14:17.

We note that Jesus uses the two words "see and know" together. We also note that he gives the reason why we "know" God. **What is the reason given by Jesus?**

John 8:38.

Again Jesus says how he got to know about his Father, but he does not use the word "know".

What other words does he use to describe the way in which he got to know all about his Father? ...

He says he "saw" and he "learnt".

Did he see with eyes like ours? ... Obviously not, since he did not have a human nature before he was born in Bethlehem.

How then did he "see" things from his Father? He means another kind of "seeing".

Genesis 4:1, 17 and 25.

The original bible text uses the word "he knew his wife", while some newer translations use the words "he had intercourse". The people of ancient times use the word "knowing" for the very intimate union between husband and wife. Even some modern languages use the word "knowing" in this way. This gives us an indication that Jesus does not mean a superficial "knowing" when he says: "you know him because he is with you" (John 14:17)

1 John 2: 3, 13, 14 and 1 John 1:1:5.

We ask ourselves: when John says several times that "we have seen".



Does he mean a "seeing" which happens in another way? We see him with our eyes of faith.

Step 5. WHY CHRISTIAN LEADERS MUST HAVE "SEEN" GOD

- Work in small groups of 3-4 persons for 20 mins.
- Discuss the following two questions and report back.
 1. The apostles were able to bear witness that Christ had risen and was alive, but how is it possible that a Christian of today can truly be a witness that Christ is present among us?
 2. Why do Christians expect that each of their leaders should be a witness to the presence of the Risen Christ?
- Write the answers on newsprint:

Step 6. BIBLE MEDITATION

- Put an open bible on a table next to the wall, and a picture of Christ next to it.
- Place a candle beside it and light it.
- Sing a hymn and then read 1John 1:1-5.
- We can meditate in silence or share our thoughts.
- After shared prayer we close with a hymn.

*“Yahweh, hear my voice as I cry!
Pity me! Answer me!
My heart has said of you
‘Seek his face’,
Yahweh, I do seek your face;
Do not hide your face from me
Ps. 27: 7-9*

*For private meditation:
John 15:8-10, 15:2,
Acts 1:1-8, 2:1-41,
John, 1-1-5, 2:3-6.*

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."