

A: GOSPEL SHARING

A\5

“YOU ARE MY WITNESSES”

(Step 6 of Gospel Sharing)

TOPICS OF ASIPA TEXTS:

A : GOSPEL SHARING (7 steps)

B : SMALL CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES

C : A PARTICIPATORY CHURCH

D : TRAINING FOR PARISH TEAMS

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Illustrated by Lee Kowling

ASIPA A: GOSPEL SHARING
Programmes for Training the Christian Community

A\5

“YOU ARE MY WITNESSES”

(Step 6 of Gospel Sharing)

Prepare beforehand:

- Posters of the parish church and of neighbourhood groups: See pp. 3&4.
- Slips of papers with the following captions:
 “Praising God”, “Visiting the sick”, “Welcoming strangers”, “Making peace”, “Preparing for First Holy Communion”, Searching for the will of God”, “Preparing young people for Confirmation”, “Accepting outcasts”, “Preparing the liturgy”, “Standing up against corruption”, “Helping the poor”.
- White board markers or chalk or markers and newsprint.

INTRODUCTION

Step 6 on our 7-step gospel sharing card reads:

“We discuss any task which our group is called to do:

- a) Report on previous task.*
- b) Which new task has to be done? WHO is doing WHAT and WHEN?”*

Many gospel sharing groups find this step rather difficult. “What kind of task should we undertake?” they ask themselves.

In our session today we would like to ask the same question:

“What should we do in step 6?”

A. "STEP 6" IN THE SCRIPTURES

1. Small groups of 2/3

- Each small group takes one of the texts below;
- Read the text and discuss the question;
- Each group reports after 5 minutes.

Question:

What has this text to do with step 6 of gospel sharing?—

- | | |
|-------------------|--------------------------|
| (1) Luke 8,19-21 | [The relatives of Jesus] |
| (2) James 1,22-25 | [Hearing the Word] |
| (3) Luke 6,46-49 | [Building on rock] |
| (4) Acts 1,6-8 | [You will be witnesses] |

Summary:

- Step 6 helps a group to put the Word of God into practice. This step prevents them from being only "listeners of Christ", without giving witness to his love, mercy and joy.

B. "STEP 6" IN SMALL CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES

- Some gospel sharing groups may regard themselves as "prayer groups" only, where each individual member finds personal strength and support for himself or herself.
- Other gospel sharing groups gradually want to grow into "Small Christian Communities". *As neighbours they want to take part in the tasks of the whole parish community.*

1. The tasks of the whole parish community

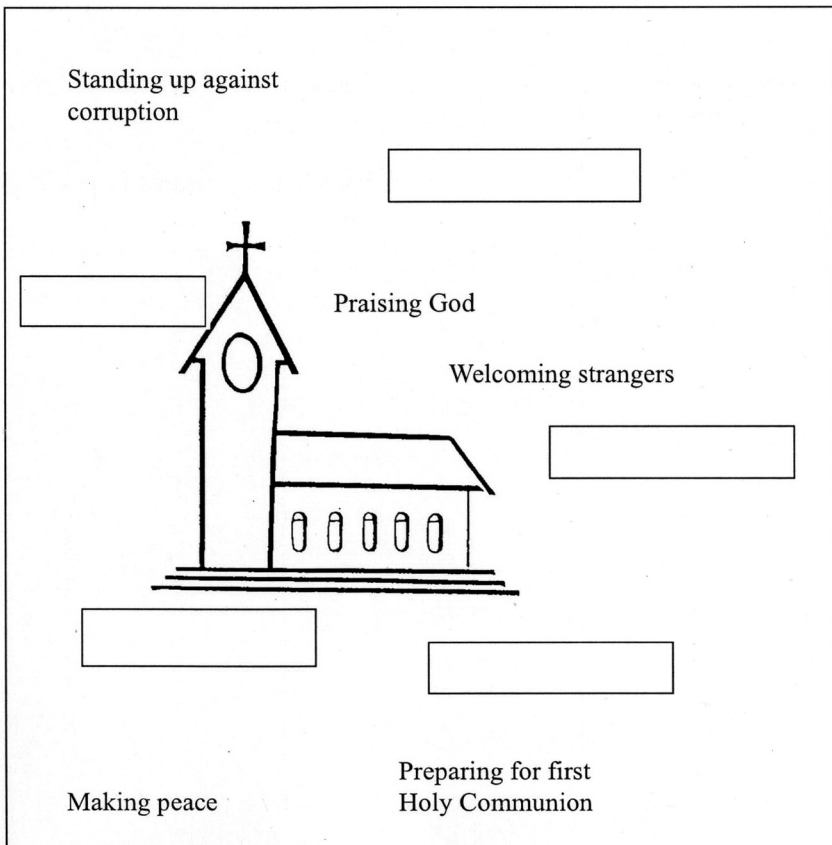
Here is a drawing of the parish centre, as a symbol of the whole parish community.

(Display the prepared drawing of a church for a large group)

Question:

What are the tasks of the whole parish community?—

(For a large group, arrange the prepared slips of paper around the church or write on the board or newsprint according to the contributions. Use the rest for supplementing the answers. For a small community, use the picture provided and fill in the boxes.)

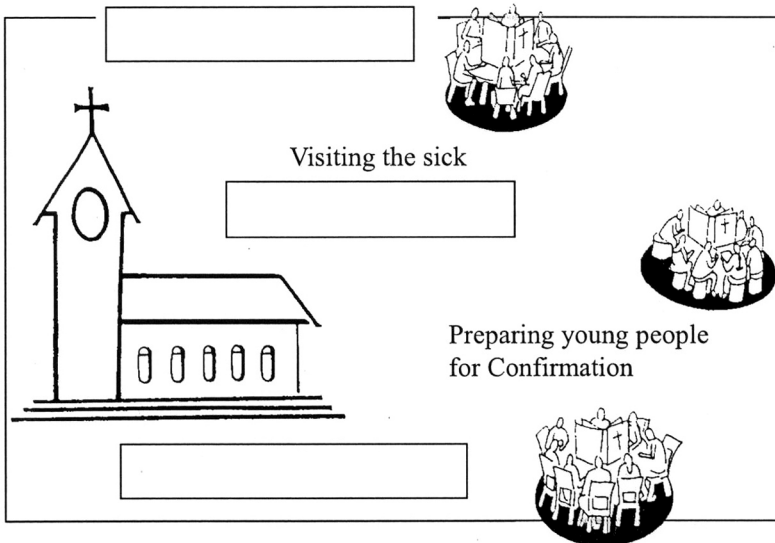


2. Small Christian Communities share in the tasks of the whole parish

The Small Christian Communities in our drawing below want to share as neighbours in the tasks of the whole parish community.

For instance:

- “Preparing young people for Confirmation”,
- “Visiting the sick”,
- “Welcoming strangers”



- Groups of 2/3 discuss the question and fill in the empty boxes.
- Report after 4 minutes.

Question:

What tasks could the Small Christian Communities above discuss in step 6 of gospel sharing?—

Supplement:

- *One small group could discuss in step 6:*
 “How can we include the young people who are preparing for Confirmation in visiting the sick and helping the outcast?”
- *Another small group could discuss in step 6:*
 “Our parish priest has asked us to prepare the petitions for the liturgy of the coming Sunday. What are our special needs in this parish for which we should pray? Who will write them down? Who will pray them in Church?”
- *A third community could discuss in step 6:*
 “A lady living by herself in our neighbourhood is sick. Two of us should visit her. Who will do it?”
- *A fourth community could discuss in step 6:*
 “There are quite a number of strangers who have settled in our neighbourhood recently. We need a team of two or three who will visit them and welcome them in the name of our community? Who will do it? When?”
- *A fifth community could discuss in step 6:*
 “The marriage of one of our neighbours seems to be in great difficulty. What can we do to help the couple? How can we show them our support?”

Does step 6 spoil the spirit of prayer?

Some people feel that discussion could spoil the atmosphere of prayer that has been built up in the first 5 steps.

We should remember, however, to become a Christian community, our experience of the Lord must lead us to act as a community of Christians. Therefore, in step 6 we should discuss concrete actions and take decisions which are close to the mind of Christ.

C. "STEP 6" IN A MEETING OF A PARISH PASTORAL COUNCIL

1. The AGENDA of the meeting becomes STEP 6

Many Parish Pastoral Councils use steps 1-4 of gospel sharing to begin their meetings. They all agreed to this beforehand and set aside 20 minutes for this purpose.

They leave out the personal sharing in step 5 and continue immediately after the silence with their agenda.

In other words, in a meeting of a Parish Pastoral Council the prepared agenda is carried out in step 6:

- a) "Report on previous task."
- b) "Which new task has to be done? WHO is doing WHAT and WHEN?"

Many other groups can also use steps 1-4 of Gospel Sharing for their meetings.



2. The effect of gospel sharing on a Parish Pastoral Council

- We discuss in the whole group:

Questions:

- *What may be the effect on a Parish Pastoral Council if they begin their meetings with steps 1-4 of gospel sharing?—*
- *What difficulties can you foresee?—*

Summary

Effect on Parish Pastoral Council:

- Many members of Parish Pastoral Councils report that the atmosphere and tone in Council meetings improve if they open with steps 1-4 of gospel sharing.
- Gospel sharing can help a Parish Pastoral Council meeting to listen to God's will when they are searching for a right decision. It helps the members to discuss the points of the agenda not as mere "managers" and "administrators" but as co-responsible partners in God's work.

Difficulties:

- Some members of Parish Pastoral Councils want to "get on with the job" and regard gospel sharing as "waste of time". In this case a period of awareness building has to precede, for instance, gospel sharing can be introduced during a day of retreat for the Pastoral Council.
- It will be necessary to agree with the members of a Council beforehand on the period of time which they want to set aside for steps 1-4 of gospel sharing at the beginning.

D."STEP 6" IN PRAYER GROUPS

1. What shall I do personally?

Step 6 in prayer groups will provide the time for individual reflections: What does the Word of God demand from me personally?

2. What shall WE do?

No prayer group, however, should close itself completely from the needs of people around them, in the neighbourhood or workplace.

They can ask themselves in step 6:

“What does the Lord want us to do for each other and for our neighbours?”

3. The Word of Life

In step 6 a group can choose a “Word of Life”. This is a word or a short phrase from the actual text which was used in the previous steps, for instance, “Forgive each other”. All members of the group try to remember this Word of Life during the following week or month. They apply it in situations when forgiving the faults of others becomes difficult.

In the subsequent meetings, the experience with the Word of Life can be shared with the whole group.

CONCLUSION

In this way, step 6 can help us to build our lives on rock and fulfill the Lord’s command: “You shall be my witnesses...to the ends of the earth.”

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."
