



B: SMALL CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES

B/6B

EVANGELIZATION IS SHARING OUR HOPE

TOPICS OF ASIPA TEXTS:

A : GOSPEL SHARING

B : SMALL CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES

C : A PARTICIPATORY CHURCH

D : TRAINING FOR PARISH TEAMS

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B/6B

EVANGELIZATION IS SHARING OUR HOPE

This session requires approximately 2½ hours. A&B can be done in 1½ hours, omitting C&D.

INTRODUCTION

Jesus came to give us hope and life. He said, 'I have come so that you may have life, life to the full' (John 10:10), 'that your joy may be complete' (John 15:11). Evangelization is sharing our hope, our life and our joy that we have received from Christ Jesus.

How can we do this? What does it mean to share hope? That is what we want to discover today.

A. EVANGELIZATION IS SHARING OUR HOPE IN CHRIST.

- *Form groups of 4/6.*
- *Read the following story and discuss the questions given below.*
- *Report to the whole group afterwards.*

The Small Christian Community In India

The members of an SCC in a village¹ in India are very poor. Most of them are unable to read or write. Gospel sharing gradually gave them a strong sense of community and mission.

¹ Ambilipada village is in Udaipur diocese in India.

Energized by the Word, they gathered the villagers to clean the village well which had dirty water for many years, they built four kilometers of road connecting the village to the main road and fought against corruption in the local electricity department. They also adopted an abandoned girl as their own.

Questions for discussion

- 1. In what sense can we say that the different activities undertaken by this SCC are ways of sharing hope and the life Christ came to give?*
- 2. Have we a similar experience of sharing hope, joy of freedom as an individual or as a community?*

Supplement

- They drew inspiration from Gospel Sharing. Their action was done in the name of Jesus who loved the poor.
- They united many in the village to work together for the common good since they had experienced being children of God the Father.
- They were inspired to keep the village well and its surroundings clean. They saw this as their responsibility since all creation was to be given back to God our Creator.
- They built a road that opened up their village to better transport and development. Inspired by the Word, they saw this as God's plan for fullness of life already starting now.
- They fought injustice in the local electricity supply office. Courage they never had before came to them from the word of God and their longing to serve the dignity of the human person.
- All these activities brought new life and joy to the people.

B. AN EXAMPLE OF EVANGELIZATION IN THE BIBLE

- *In your small groups read the scripture text about the Samaritan woman and discuss the questions.*
- *Read Jn.4: 1—19, 28-29, 39-42 aloud.*
- *Share your reflections on questions two and three below with the whole group.*

Questions for discussion

- 1. What new hope did Jesus bring to the Samaritan woman?*
- 2. What hope and life did she bring to the villagers?*
- 3. What can we learn about evangelization from this Bible event?*

Supplement

- The Samaritan woman shared her own experience with Jesus. “He told me everything I ever did”, she said.
- Jesus gave her dignity and respect, which she did not get in society.
- Jesus helped her to reflect deeply about her life and faith.
- She did not scold the villagers nor force them to change their religion instead she raised their interest by her own conviction and enthusiasm.
- “Could he be the Messiah”? She asked. She was already placing her faith in Jesus and was gently inviting the others to meet Jesus and perhaps find the same hope in him.
- The villagers later told her that though her testimony was what brought them to Jesus, they decided to place their full trust in Jesus because they had a chance to meet and experience him personally and they had made their own decision now.
- Evangelization is helping people to hope even in times of difficulty, by placing all their trust in Jesus.

NB: It is recommended that the following sections take place at another time. If only one session is possible, continue to section F and the Conclusion.

C. THE SCC IN CALICUT TOWN EXPERIENCE HOPE AND LIBERATION

- *Work in groups of 4/6.*
- *Read the following story and discuss the question.*
- *Report to the whole group after 10 minutes.*

The members of a SCC in Calicut, South India, were discussing how to celebrate Christmas. Mrs. Sophie suggested: "This year we can gather in the house of Mr. Jose, who is a very poor tailor, the only orthodox Church member in our area." After some discussion all agreed with her suggestion. Mr. Jose lived in a small rented room attached to the back of a rich Muslim's house. The Muslim owner wanted that the rent be paid on the first day of every month at any cost, even though Jose often didn't have enough to make ends meet.

The SCC organizing committee felt that not many members would turn up since Jose is very poor and he is not a Catholic. So they prepared much less food than the usual quantity for their celebrations. To their surprise, on the appointed day, everyone came for the celebration so that most of them had to stand outside Jose's house since it was too small. The Muslim landowner watched rather suspiciously not knowing the reason for such a big gathering in his courtyard. Suddenly it rained and no one had brought an umbrella. The organizers approached the landowner and requested his help. When he realized that it was a Christmas celebration he gladly

welcomed them into his spacious house. The organizers realized that they did not have enough food to share with everyone, especially now that the Muslim family members too were joining the celebration. They decided to go home and bring the food they had prepared for their own family Christmas. The Bible reading, the Christmas message given by an elder, the carol singing, the prayers and the sharing of the food created such a Godly atmosphere among brothers and sisters of different faiths. It became a memorable Christmas experience for all.

After that celebration the Muslim landowner became more understanding of Jose and his problems. He never insisted that the rent be paid on the first day of every month.

Question for discussion

In what way did the Calicut SCC help those who gathered for the Christmas celebration to experience the freedom, joy and hope which Christ came to give us?

Supplement

- Everyone who participated in the celebration experienced deep joy.
- Mr. Jose must have felt really loved and cared for by the Christian community.
- They, the Christians and the Muslim family were liberated to share joyfully.
- The Muslim was liberated to be compassionate to Mr. Jose.

D. WORK WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT!

It is the Holy Spirit who touches the hearts of people and makes them ready to hear the Good News and change their lives.

- *Read Acts 10:1-33, 44-48 and discuss the following questions:*

Questions for discussion

- 1. Who evangelized Cornelius? What was the role of St Peter?***
- 2. What is our own role in evangelization?***
- 3. Reflect on how cooperating with the Holy Spirit is very important for a right attitude towards Evangelization.***

Supplement

- Cornelius responded to the Holy Spirit in his heart and lived a generous and loving life. The Spirit led him along the path of God's love.
- Peter was a willing instrument of the Holy Spirit. He always sought to do what God was asking.
- God induces change in people's hearts and draws them to himself. We are only his instruments. We cannot change people's hearts but we can show them the love of God in our own actions and through the teachings of the Christ which we obey.
- We will be very respectful of the experience that people have of God and we will listen very carefully to learn from the people whom we want to evangelize.
- We will understand that the Holy Spirit in them makes us brothers and sisters united in our common humanity.
- We will realize that people need our example of life and witness so that they can experience the Holy Spirit who is dwelling in their heart.

- We will realize that the will of the Father is that all peoples are brought to fullness of life in the Spirit. No one is excluded from the love and forgiveness of God.

E. SHARING OUR HOPE IN DIALOGUE

At the Meeting of all the bishops of Asia with the Holy Father in 1998, they discussed what evangelization means for the peoples of Asia who live among people of all the great religions. There was a strong emphasis on our mission to dialogue, to share the lives and struggles of the people we live with just as God showed us by the life of Jesus.

- *Work in pairs.*
- *Read both the following texts and try to say in your own words what connection there is between evangelization and dialogue.*
- *Discuss the question below in the whole group.*

Question for discussion

What does it mean, in our own context, to share our hope with people's of other faiths?

1. The desire for dialogue is not simply a strategy for peaceful coexistence among peoples; it is an essential part of the Church's mission because it has its origin in the Father's loving dialogue of salvation with humanity through the Son in the power of the Holy Spirit... Therefore, nothing but fervent and unselfish solidarity prompts the Church's dialogue with men and women of Asia who seek the truth in love. *EA29*

2. The Synod Fathers went on to speak about the need for *a dialogue of life and heart*. The followers of Christ must have the gentle and humble heart of their Master, never proud, never condescending, as they meet their partners in dialogue (cf. Mt11: 29). “Inter-religious relations are best developed in a context of openness to other believers, a willingness to listen and the desire to respect and understand others in their differences. For all this love is indispensable. This should result in collaboration, harmony and mutual enrichment.” *EA 31*

F. WE CAN SHARE OUR HOPE

Discuss in the whole group how our SCC can be an agent of Christian hope, joy and freedom to others. Make a concrete plan. Who will do what, when and how?

CONCLUSION

Sing and pray to close.

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."
