



B: Small Christian Communities

B\12A

A Common Ground for Interreligious Dialogue

Together we seek the One we long for

TOPICS OF AsIPA TEXTS:

- A: GOSPEL SHARING(7 Steps)**
- B: SMALL CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES**
- C: A PARTICIPATORY CHURCH**
- D: TRAINING FOR PARISH TEAMS**
- E: SPIRITIAL FORMATION**
- F: FORMATION AND TRAINING OF LEADERS**

AsIPA B: Small Christian Communities

Interreligious Dialogue Programmes for Training Small Christian Communities

B\12A

A Common Ground for Interreligious Dialogue

*Together we seek the One we long for
“Oh Lord, our hearts are restless until they rest in you” St Augustine*

Introduction

In this session we want to realize that in every person there is an innate longing for God. This longing we understand, in our Christian tradition, comes from the conviction that we are created by God in God's own image and likeness. As Christians we understand that God acted first and created us and then journeyed with us to make us his own people. For many religions this is not the case. They believe that we must seek God and attain his approval by good works. No matter what our belief, the deep longing for God comes from the mysterious knowledge people have that only God provides the answers to the ultimate questions in our lives – the answers that we seek to the purpose of our lives and the meaning of our death.

A. Let us Read from the Bible.

Read Genesis 1: 26-31

1. *Read the text twice clearly and slowly.*
2. *Repeat any word or phrase from the text*
3. *Keep a moment of silence – let the Lord speak to your heart*
4. *Share what you have heard in your heart from the text.*

B. Let us Study Together a paragraph from the Catechism.

1. Read together the following paragraph #33
2. In buzz groups (pairs) try to say what you understand from the text.
3. Discuss how this text is related to the text of Scripture that we just read.
(Genesis 1: 26-31)

“The human person with his openness to truth and beauty, his sense of moral goodness, his freedom and his conscience, with his longings for the infinite and for happiness, man questions himself about God’s existence. In all this, he discerns again about his spiritual soul. The soul, ‘the seed of eternity, we bear in ourselves, irreducible to merely material, can have its origin only in God.’”
(Catechism of the Catholic Church [CCC] #33)

C. Our Longing for God Today

Let us reflect and discuss using the following questions:

- 1. What are some of the ways we can see that all people have a longing for God?**
- 2. Why can we say that dialogue about God, life and death is possible between people of different faiths?**

Supplement

Question One:

- We find many people worship in many different forms – in temples, mosques, churches, at home, in the forest. There are a great many places where people gather to worship God according to their own beliefs.
- People have many ways of communicating with God, with prayer, music, signs and symbols that represent the deities and the divine.
- Some people seek meaning in their lives by serving the less fortunate, by giving up wealth and power to live ascetic lives, through wisdom literature and many other ways.
- When tragedy strikes people, they look to God for answers and for comfort even if they have not been active in any faith tradition.

Question Two:

- We believe that all are made to enter into a relationship with God and that God is our common Creator and Father/Mother. This makes dialogue between us possible and fruitful.
- We believe and have experienced that people long to talk about what will happen to them when they die or what their purpose is on earth. Dialogue on the fundamental truths of life as we see it can help people in their seeking.

Conclusion

Let us pray that we may have the mind and heart of God who came to be with us and to enter into a relationship with us.

1. We read from the **Gospel of John 1: 1-5**

2. We repeat some sentences:

(take turns to repeat the following verses slowly and prayerfully)

- In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God,
- All things came to be through him, and without him nothing came to be.
- Through him was life, and this life was the light of the human race;
- The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.
- Through him was life, and this life was the light of the human race,
- The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

3. Reflection

(can be read like a psalm with right and left sides taking turns to echo the lines.)

- The Word existed since the beginning. The Word was God.
- o God exists before any man and woman.
- God is the source of all life.
- o There is an inborn longing for God in every person.
- God is light for all.
- o In Dialogue we can approach the light together
- Darkness also existed.
- o Let us not choose the darkness
- Light was more powerful than darkness.
- o The Light was source of life for everyone.

4. Let us pray.

God our Father and Mother, we ask that you show us how to approach people with deep love and respect. Give us hearts to see the deep inner longing of each and every person for you. Give us the courage and grace to journey with all your people and to love and serve them as you would have us do. We make this prayer in Jesus name. Amen.

Close with a hymn or a 'Glory be...'

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."