



B: Small Christian Communities

C\8

Listening with the Heart

Dialogue is Speaking and Deep Listening

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 B: Small Christian Communities

Interreligious Dialogue Programmes for Training Small Christian Communities

B\12D

Listening with the Heart

Dialogue is speaking and deep listening

Introduction

If someone of a different religious tradition asks you 'What do you believe about life after death for human beings, how would we respond? Would we find ourselves repeating what we learnt from our catechism or what we heard the priest say? If we thought about it would we find that some of our beliefs are tied up with our culture or surroundings and have little to do with the teachings of the Catholic faith? So, what do we actually believe? Have we ever had a chance to express our faith in simple words that relate to life?

In this session we want to become more aware of the different layers of feeling and thinking that make up our beliefs and also become more aware of how well and deeply we listen when someone is speaking.

A. Entering into Interreligious Dialogue

If we think honestly and carefully we will realise that our beliefs are not so simple since, as human beings we may belong to cultures that have their own customs and rituals pertaining to life and death; we may belong to a particular ethnic community that has rich and long standing traditions and meanings provided or we may have been converted as adults and we have not left behind some of the old religious beliefs or practices from our previous religion.

Most people have these 'layers' of belief, understanding and faith woven together in a dynamic fabric of everyday life. Many people are not very aware of how all the different influences in our lives play a part in our daily living and choices. Sometimes these 'layers' make understanding more challenging and can give way to misunderstanding. We need to ask questions to clarify the meaning of things that are said.

Take 20 minutes for the following activity:

1. *Sit in pairs or triads.*
2. *Choose one of the following topics.*
 - a. What I believe about prayer
 - b. What I believe about the resurrection from the dead
 - c. What I believe about pain and suffering
 - d. What I understand about 'being saved by Jesus'.

3. *Take some time to make notes or just to reflect quietly*
4. *Now share with your partner/s what you understand or believe and give some life experience if there are any related to this belief. You are encouraged to ask questions to clarify and understand.*
5. *Evaluate yourselves. How did you do? Did you find any time in your sharing when you were sharing your customs rather than your faith? Is there much room for improvement on how we express our faith?*

Let us practice the other topics on your own or with your communities in the coming weeks and do an evaluation each time.

B. Listening with the Heart

One of the key skills in Interreligious dialogue is the capacity to listen, to clarify and to listen with the heart as well as the head. For this reason also, we need to take many steps in our journey with people of various faiths. As we saw in part A, Interreligious dialogue has many forms and we can work with people of other faiths on common concerns; we can become friends by supporting them in difficult times or celebrating life with them at various stages. The Dialogue of Religious experience is not usually the first step in our dialogue even though we desire to build unity and peace and deeper appreciation between all peoples of faith.

Keeping this in mind, let us put our listening ability to the test and continue to practice to listen with love, humility and respect.

C. DIALOGUE needs GOOD LISTENING SKILLS

Let us practice our listening skills by doing the following exercise.

1. Choose ONE topic of common concern for the whole group.
Some suggested topics:
 - a) Passing on faith to children is more difficult today
 - b) Our faith should impact the way we work
 - c) The Sacrament of Penance is still relevant today
 - d) We can use social media for evangelization
 - e) What I love about the Mass
2. Think about it for three or four minutes. Think about what you want to say on your chosen topic.
3. Form a circle with five or six people.
4. First person begins to talk for one minute on the chosen topic.
5. Second person has to repeat accurately what the first person said. All agree that the content is accurate before he/she can continue to talk on the topic themselves. The third person then repeats accurately what was said before beginning to talk themselves and it goes on...
6. Complete the circle in this way.

D. Conclusion

- Consider for a moment. If you had to give yourself a score or grade from one to ten. Ten is the best listener. What would you give yourself? Do you think you can improve your listening skills?
- As part of our effort to listen more deeply to people, during the coming weeks try to listen more carefully than usual to people when they are speaking.
- Pause, face them and listen. These could be your family members, neighbours in the corridor or market place, colleagues at work.
- Let us pray for the humility and love to listen with our whole being and to desire unity and peace so that we are able to become people of dialogue.

METHOD OF ASIIPA TEXTS

ASIIPA 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.

ASIIPA 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 "ASIIPA approach"

1. ASIIPA 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."