

C: A PARTICIPATORY CHURCH

C\1 PARTICIPATING IN THE FRIENDSHIP OF CHRIST

TOPICS OF ASIPA TEXTS:

A : GOSPEL SHARING (7 steps)

B : SMALL CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES

C : A PARTICIPATORY CHURCH

D : TRAINING FOR PARISH TEAMS

Imprimatur:

+ Joseph Ti-Kang, Archbishop of Taipei,
December 8, 1996

Copyright:

AsIPA Desk, FABC

Distributed by:

AsIPA Desk, FABC
34, Lane 32, Kuangfu, S.Road,
Taipei, Taiwan (1052)
Tel/Fax: [886]- 2-577 2007

ASIPA C: A PARTICIPATORY CHURCH
Programmes for Training the Christian Community

C\1

PARTICIPATING IN THE FRIENDSHIP OF CHRIST

Our topic on “Participating in the Friendship of Christ” needs an atmosphere of a spiritual retreat. Chapters B and C can be used independently, if necessary.

INTRODUCTION

The more than 400 Bishops of all Asian countries are united in the FABC, the “Federation of Asian Bishops’ Conferences”. At their Fifth General Assembly in Bandung 1990 they gave us the following directive:

“The Church will have to be a participatory Church.”

Many parishes will argue: “We are already a participatory Church!
 We have lots of committees and Church organizations.

Whenever the priest wants something to be done, people come forward without delay. We are already a participatory Church!”

Our question today is : Do we all feel the same way? What do the Bishops really mean when they talk about a participatory Church? What do they expect us to participate in?

Together we shall look for an answer.

This common search may give us new courage and new joy to be Christians in modern Asia as we approach the year 2000.

A. "I CALL YOU FRIENDS BECAUSE I HAVE TOLD YOU EVERYTHING" (John 15,15)

1. Story

Andrew had a good friend by the name of Paul. They spent lots of time together and played in the same soccer club. Andrew called Paul his best friend.

Andrew, however had a secret which he did not want to share with his friend Paul. Secretly he learnt the French language through a correspondence course. French would open for him better chances to find a well paid job.

Question:

What do you think of the friendship between Andrew and Paul? What do you expect of a "best friend"?—

2 Jesus gives the best example of real friendship

- We read John 15,13-17
- We repeat words or short phrases from the text in order to experience the presence of Christ who talks to us in the words of Scripture:
- *(The facilitator repeats the following phrases if they were not repeated by the participants:)*

“You are my friends”

(Repeat 3 times with pauses in between)

“The greatest love a person can have.” *(Repeat 3x)*

“To give his life for his friends.” *(Repeat 3x)*

“The servant does not know what his master is doing.”

(Repeat 3x)

“I call you friends” *(Repeat 3x)*

“I have told you everything.” *(Repeat 3x)*

- We read again the full text of John 15,13-17

Summary

Jesus gives us a most radical example of real friendship.

Firstly, his friendship is unselfish love. Jesus is ready to die for his friends.

Secondly, Jesus does not hold back any secrets. All that he has received from the Father he has shared with us.

Thirdly, Jesus has offered his love and friendship in advance and does not wait for us to love him first.

3. How Jesus shows us his friendship

- Groups of 2/3 read one of the following texts.
- Discuss the question
- Report after 5 minutes

Question:

What does this text tell us about our intimate union and friendship with Christ?—

- | | |
|-----------------------|---|
| (1) Matthew 9,14-15 | [Jesus, the bridegroom] |
| (2) Matthew 11,16-19 | [Jesus, the friend of outcasts] |
| (3) Luke 11,5-10 | [A friend opens the door] |
| (4) Matthew 18,20 | [Jesus remains with us] |
| (5) Romans 5,8-11 | [Through Christ God has shown how much he loves us] |
| (6) Ephesians 1,4-6 | [Through Christ we belong to God] |
| (7) Ephesians 1,9-11 | [God's secret plan revealed] |
| (8) Galatians 2,19-20 | ["Christ lives in me!"] |

Summary:

- Jesus compares his relationship with his friends to the relationship between bride and bridegroom. This is one of the deepest forms of friendship.
- Jesus accepts us as we are, even if we are sinners and outcasts.
- Jesus is the one who gave his life for his friends so that all of us can be united with God.
- St. Paul rejoices over the intimate union between him and Christ who lives in him.

B. IN BAPTISM WE HAVE ACCEPTED THE FRIENDSHIP OF CHRIST

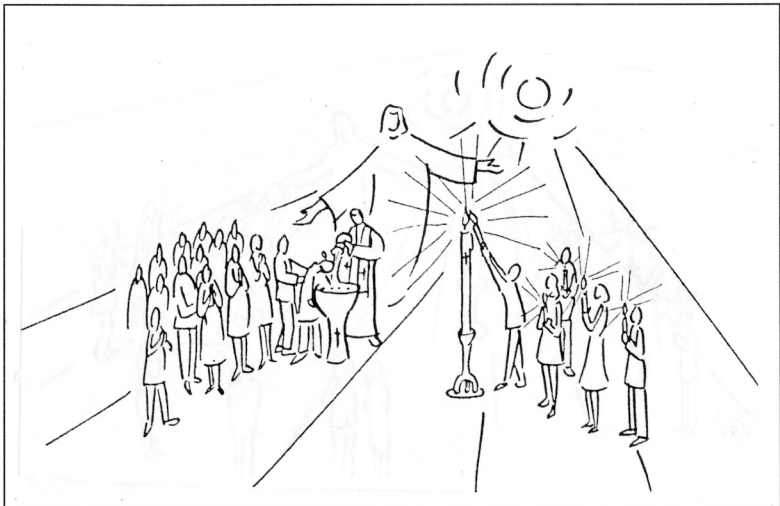
1. Small groups of 2/3

- Discuss the questions below.
- Report after 7 minutes

Questions:

(When reflecting on the questions below, please remember your own baptism or the renewal of your baptismal promises at Easter.)

- *How is friendship with Jesus made possible by Baptism?—*
- *In what way can we live and experience his friendship?—*



Supplement:

(All read the supplement silently. Then share on the question, "What other points do we find in the supplement which are additional to our own findings?")

a) *Baptism is a love-pact with Jesus.*

- In baptism and at the renewal of our baptismal promises we surrender ourselves into the hands of Christ.
- In baptism Jesus tells us: "You belong to me".
- We answer: "We belong to you".
- Through faith and baptism we become the friends and disciples of Jesus.

b) *How we can live and experience Christ's friendship:*

- As friends we can discuss everything with Jesus: Our secrets, our feelings, our frustrations, our sufferings and our joys.
- He always has time for us, he understands us, he will never disappoint us.
- We can ask our friend Jesus before any decision: "What is your opinion, Lord?"
- Through the reading of the Bible we have a chance to listen to Jesus in a special way. He helps us to see our lives with his eyes. A gospel sharing group can help us learn how to listen to Jesus.

C. IN CONFIRMATION JESUS STRENGTHENS HIS FRIENDS TO TAKE PART IN HIS MISSION

A good friend shows interest in the work of his or her companion. The worries and joys of one friend become the worries and joys of the other.

Jesus expects the same from us. He invites us to take part in his concerns and interests, share in his worries and joys.

“As the Father sent me, so I send you,” he says.

It is in the Sacrament of Confirmation that Jesus strengthens us to take an active part in his concerns and interests for all people and the world.

1. Baptism and Confirmation belong together

- Look at the drawing below.
- Discuss in the whole group:



Question:

In what way does the Sacrament of Confirmation “complete” the Sacrament of Baptism?—

Summary:

- In baptism we are accepted by Christ as members of his community of God's children. Therefore, St. Paul compares baptism to a "rebirth" in Christ.
- In Confirmation we are marked as mature and adult members of the community.
- A mature member of a family is expected to take part in the concerns of the whole family. The same is expected from those who have become mature members in the family of God's children, the Church.
- In the Sacrament of Confirmation Christ strengthens us to go out with him into the world. Strengthened by his Spirit we show our friendship in practice. We stand up for his ideals and take part in his "heartfelt interests" and concerns.

D. HOW PETER AND PAUL TAKE PART IN CHRIST'S CONCERNS AND INTERESTS

1. Small groups of 2/3

- Each group reads one of the texts below
- Discuss the questions
- Report after 7 minutes

Questions:

- *What "heartfelt interest" of Jesus is revealed in this text?—*
- *How is this "heartfelt interest" of Jesus reflected in the letters of St.Peter or St.Paul?—*

- (1) John 13,12-15 and *1 Peter 5,1-4*
 (2) John 13,34-35 and *Colossians 3,12-15*
 (3) Luke 10,1-16 and *2 Timothy 4,1-5*
 (4) John 20,19-21 and *Romans 12, 9-13*

Supplement:

- (1) It is the "heartfelt interest" of Jesus that people in authority serve their subjects and do not boss over them.
St. Peter echoes this "mind of Christ" when he tells the elders of the Church not to "boss over the group which is in their charge".
- (2) It is the "heartfelt interest of Jesus" that his disciples make him known to others by the love they show for each other.
St. Paul gives practical examples of how this love is exercised in a Christian community.

- (3) It is the “heartfelt interest of Jesus” to proclaim the Good News of the heavenly Kingdom to all peoples.

St. Paul advises St. Timothy and us to do this with courage - even in the face of difficulties and suffering.

- (4) It is the “heartfelt interest of Jesus” that his peace-mission be continued on earth by his disciples.

St. Paul sees all Christians engaged in the “service of the Lord” when they love each other with deep affection, share with those in need, and bring joy and hope wherever they are.

E. HOW DO WE LIVE IN OUR DAILY LIVES OUR FRIENDSHIP WITH CHRIST?

1. Form groups of 6/8

- Each group discusses the questions below
- Report after 20 minutes

Questions:

- *Name some ordinary people whom you think are “friends of Christ”. Why do you think so?—*
- *What do you think is Christ’s “heartfelt interest” in our daily lives and in the Church?—*
- *How can we renew our friendship with Christ when we have failed to take part in his concerns and interests? —*

PRAYER

We thank Jesus for making us his friends.
(All are invited to pray)

- We sing a hymn to the Holy Spirit

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."
