

C: A PARTICIPATORY CHURCH

C\3

PARTICIPATING IN GOD'S PLAN FOR THE WORLD (Kingdom of God and the Eucharist)

TOPICS OF AsIPA TEXTS:

A : GOSPEL SHARING

B : SMALL CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES

C : A PARTICIPATORY CHURCH

D : TRAINING FOR PARISH TEAMS

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

C\3

PARTICIPATING IN GOD'S PLAN FOR THE WORLD (Kingdom of God and the Eucharist)

Note:

- This session is not meant to be completed in one sitting.. Chapter A, B and C can be used independently from each other at different meetings.
- Prepare on newsprint the poster needed on page 2.


INTRODUCTION

In one of the remote towns in a mountain area the people had a problem: There was no Secondary School for their children. So the head of the community called the people together and discussed the matter. Eventually a plan for building the new school was accepted. Now they asked themselves: Who will help to dig the ground, cart building materials, give a hand or contribute in other ways. And it worked!

At the opening of the Secondary School all who were involved in the building could pride themselves and say, "We have done it! We all took part in completing this great plan!"

Our Creator-God, too, has a plan. He has a plan not only for each one of us personally but also for all peoples and the whole of creation! He has planned a “New Earth” and a “New Heaven”, as we read in the last book of the bible (Rev 21,1).

Jesus has given a special name to this plan of God. He calls it the “Kingdom of God”.

 *Write on newsprint*

**The plan of God
for all peoples and nature
is called
“KINGDOM OF GOD”**

Jesus has taught us to pray every day,
“Our Father in heaven..... Your kingdom come!”

In other words, we are all called to make the Kingdom of God arrive among us! We are co-responsible to make God’s amazing plan with the world a reality!

This is the aim of our session today:
We want to reflect on some important aspects of God’s plan and our part in it.

A. RECONCILIATION OF PEOPLES

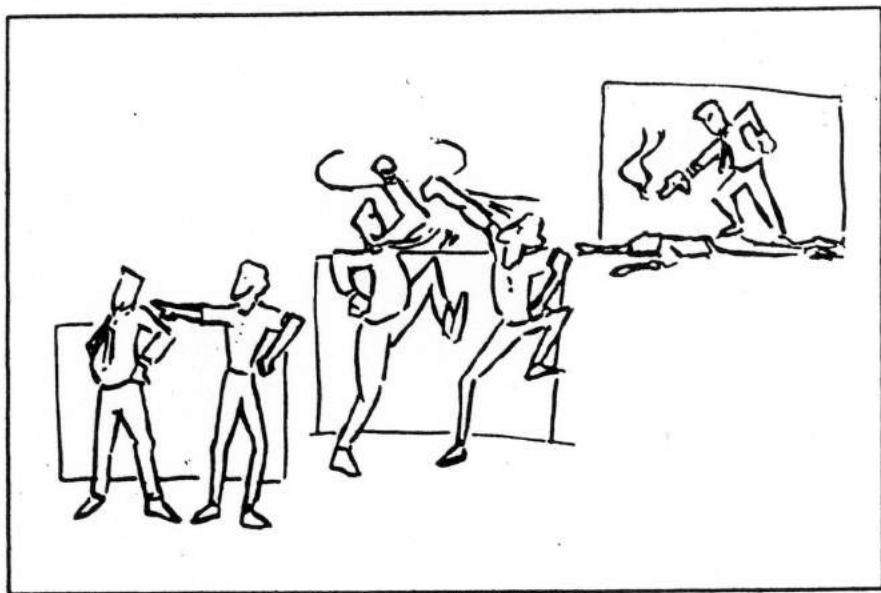
Co-responsibility in the "Kingdom Plan"

1. The "world-way" of solving problems

- ☛ *Look at the drawing below.*
Discuss the questions in the whole group.

Questions:

- *What may be the main reasons why peoples and nations find it difficult to live together in peace?*
- *What is the "world-way" of solving these difficulties? --*





Supplement:

- (1) We are unwilling to share our riches with other people and cultures.
 - We want power and wealth for our own people only.
 - Often we do not try to understand or appreciate cultures and values different from ours.

- (2) Solving problems the “world way”, that means by force, often at the cost of the innocent and poor.
 - Treating minorities like slaves or an underclass.

2. The community of nations according to God's “Kingdom Plan”

The prophet Isaiah experienced God's “Kingdom Plan” in an extraordinary vision. He could see all nations gathered in unity around the festival table which God had prepared for them.

The Apostle John as well was allowed to experience the way in which God's “Kingdom Plan” will become a reality at the end of times. He shares with us this vision in the last book of the bible.

☛ *Form small groups of 4/6*

- Each group read ONE of the texts below.
- Discuss the questions below the drawing.
- Report after 10 minutes. (Read your text to the whole group before giving your report!)

(1) Isaiah 25,6-10

(The “Kingdom Feast” on the mountain)

(2) Revelation 7,9-17

(The “Kingdom Feast” in heaven)

**Questions:**

- *Compare your text with the drawing. --*
- *In what political and economic efforts in our world of today do we see God’s “Kingdom Plan” already being realized or attempted? --*
- *What are “seeds of the kingdom” in our own local culture?--*

3. The Eucharist is the "Kingdom Feast" of peace and reconciliation among all nations!

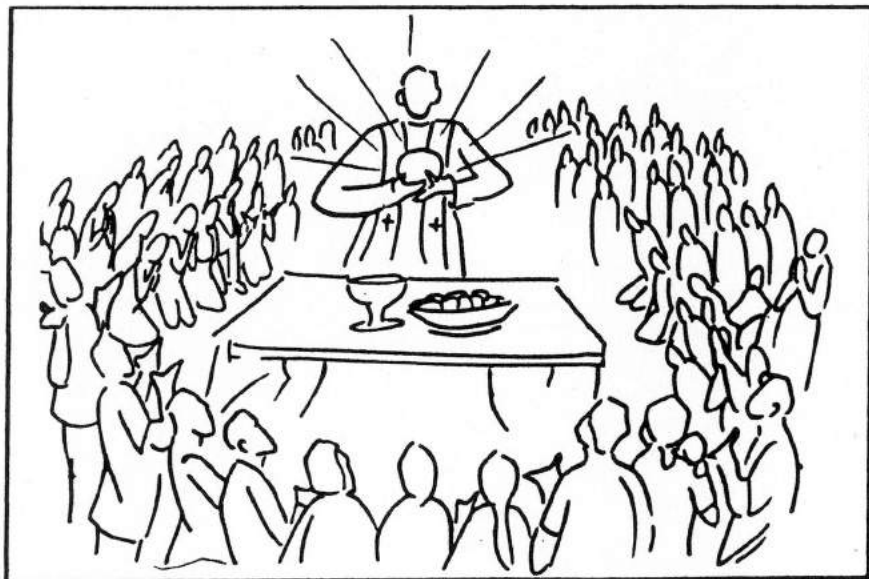
When we come to Mass on Sunday we come to God's "Kingdom Feast on the mountain"!

For instance, at every Eucharist we celebrate in a very concrete way that God will bring together all peoples and nations. (This is true even if a particular Eucharist is poorly celebrated!)

☞ *Discuss in the whole group:*

Question:

- ***In what way can we experience at the Eucharist that God unites all nations and races now already? --***



Supplement:

- God forgives the people of all different language - groups who have come to receive mercy.
- The message of love encourages all people present to accept each other as sisters and brothers.
- All (language-groups) are invited to give each other a sign of peace.
- All (language-groups) are invited to receive from the same festival table!
- At Eucharistic World Congresses we see God's "Kingdom Feast" of all nations and languages in a special way.
- At the Eucharist we experience that God is in the center of his people, uniting them in his own love and feeding them with his own life, his body and blood.
- Even if some people are present but hindered from receiving Holy Communion - we show to them our respect and love. They belong to us.

4. Our co-responsibility in God's "Kingdom Plan": Reconciliation of peoples!

Jesus invites us at every Eucharist, "Do this in memory of me!" This command, of course, means first of all to do the same as Jesus did at the Last Supper.

However, it means even more. It means also, "Continue celebrating the Eucharist in your lives! Accept your co-responsibility in my mission to unite all peoples and races.

This is the 'Kingdom Plan'! Do THIS in memory of me!"

- ☞ *Discuss in small groups of 4/6.*
Report after 10 minutes.

Question:

- ***In what ways can we, the Christians of this parish, co-operate in reconciling people and create unity and joy among people? –***

5. Prayer

Let us ask the Lord for his strength.

- ☞ *Different people from the group repeat three times prayerfully and with pauses in between the following petitions of the Our Father:*
- Our Father in heaven. (3x)
- Holy be your name. (3x)
- Your Kingdom come. (3x)
- Your will be done. (3x)
- Forgive us our sins. (3x)
- As we forgive those who sin against us. (3x)

B. SHARING WITH OTHER NATIONS

Co-responsibility in the "Kingdom Plan"

1. The "world logic": More profit for myself!

It belongs to human nature to collect and grab more and more riches, even at the cost of others. We may call this unconcerned and selfish drive within us the "world logic".



In the life of nations, this "world logic" has a disastrous effect. For instance, "an innumerable multitude of people suffer under the intolerable burden of poverty.... In spite of the praiseworthy efforts made in the last two decades by the more developed nations...the situation is notably worse."

(John Paul II SRS, 13 and 16)

☛ *Discuss in the whole group:*

Question:

- *What are some of the reasons why the situation in the poor countries is “notably worse” today than decades ago? –*

Supplement:

- Rich and powerful nations do too little for the poor ones. (John Paul II in SRS, art 16).
- Rich countries exploit the natural resources of the poor ones because they have the money and the power to control trade and prices.
- It is a generally known fact that today 80 % of all wealth in the world is used by 20 % of the people. This means that the overwhelming majority of people have to be satisfied with 20 % of all the goods which the world offers.
- Nobody would deny that profit making is necessary in business. It becomes different, however, if “maximum profit” for shareholders becomes the guiding principle.
- A small group of very rich leaders in poor countries use most of the country’s resources and money for their personal benefit.
- Even poor countries spend a huge amount of money on weapons.

2. God's "Kingdom Plan": **Justice for all! Family sharing!**

At all times, the prophets have proclaimed God's "Kingdom Plan" with courage and without fear. Some had to die for it like Jesus himself! In the name of God they demanded justice for the 'little ones' and the poor!

☛ *Small groups of 2/3.*

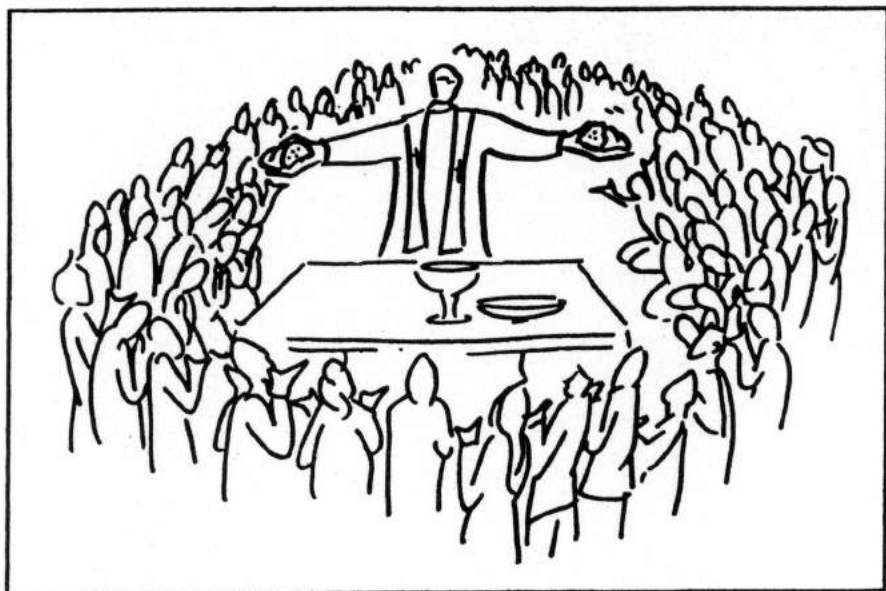
- Each group reads ONE of the texts below.
 - Discuss the question.
 - Report after 10 minutes.
- (1) **Amos 8,4-6**
[Against swindlers and exploiters]
 - (2) **Jeremiah 22,13-16**
[Against the king who is looking after himself first]
 - (3) **Acts 2, 44-47**
[Family-sharing in the Early Church]
 - (4) **Matthew 25,31-46**
[The Lord will ask some hard questions]

Question

- ***What has our text to do with the problem of the rich and poor nations in our world of today? –***

3. The Eucharist is the “Kingdom Feast” of sharing

At holy Mass God’s “Kingdom Plan” of family sharing becomes visible.



✎ *Discuss in the whole group:*

Question:

- *Where do we experience “sharing as a family” at the Eucharist?—*

Supplement:

- The breaking of bread is a sign that God himself is sharing himself with us, his life, his love and mercy.
- Sharing in the one cup has the same meaning: God shares himself completely with us and binds himself to us in love.
- Praying for others we share in the troubles of others.
- Through our collections for the poor we share with the needy and underprivileged.

4. Our co-responsibility in God's "Kingdom Plan": Sharing as a family!

At the Eucharist we experience the total and radical sharing of God with us human beings. Again, Jesus commands us, "Do this in memory of me!"

☛ *Discuss in the whole group:*

Question:

- *What does "sharing" mean in our world of today if we take the Eucharist as our model for sharing? --*

Supplement:

The Eucharist inspires us to adopt the "Kingdom Way of Sharing":

- Sharing time with people with whom we live.
- As individuals sharing goods with those who are in need.
- Sharing in decision making.

- Sharing information.
- Different cultural groups share their cultural riches with others groups.
- International business companies which use “cheap labour” from poor countries should use fair practices and share their profit with those countries.
- The “Kingdom Way” of sharing is adopted in small Christian communities where people are inspired by the word of God to share their faith and their goods in times of need.
- Small Christian communities empower people to challenge those who follow the ‘world logic’ of grabbing and making profit at the cost of others.

5. Prayer:

☛ *Different people from the group repeat three times prayerfully the following petitions of the Our Father:*

Let us pray!

- Our Father in heaven. (3x)
- Holy be your name. (3x)
- Your Kingdom come. (3x)
- Your will be done. (3x)
- Give us today our daily bread. (3x)
- Deliver us from all evil. (3x)

C. TRANSFORM NATURE AND DO NOT DESTROY IT!

Co-responsibility in the "Kingdom Plan"

1. The "world way" of using nature

- ☛ *Look at the drawing.*
Discuss in the whole group:

Question:

- *Give examples from your own experience of how we destroy and exploit nature. —*



Supplement:

The “world way” of using nature:

- Air, water and soil pollution.
- Cutting down trees without replanting them.
- Pesticides that kill valuable animal and plant species as well.
- Tropical rain-forests are systematically destroyed.
- Soil erosion and oversalting of the ground through flood irrigation renders millions of hectares useless every year.
- Exploitation of precious resources like oil, coal and minerals without thinking of future generations.

2. Nature in God's "Kingdom Plan"

God has his "Kingdom Plan" for us and the whole of creation, including the mountains, air, water, trees, flowers, and animals.

- Even without human beings, nature would be of great value. The beauty of nature belongs to God's beauty, the power of nature reflects the power of God.

All people should enjoy the beauty of nature and share in its riches, including clean air and clean water. Very often, however, a small number of people destroy nature for their own benefit without thinking of others.

Unfortunately, we get used to spoilt and destroyed nature. We get used to seeing rubbish everywhere, dirty rivers and we accept to breathe in polluted air without realizing it.

☛ *Discuss in the whole group the question below the picture:*

Question:

- *What do you think is God's "Kingdom Plan" for all creation? What was his intention when he created the world, allowing it to develop? –*

**Supplement:**

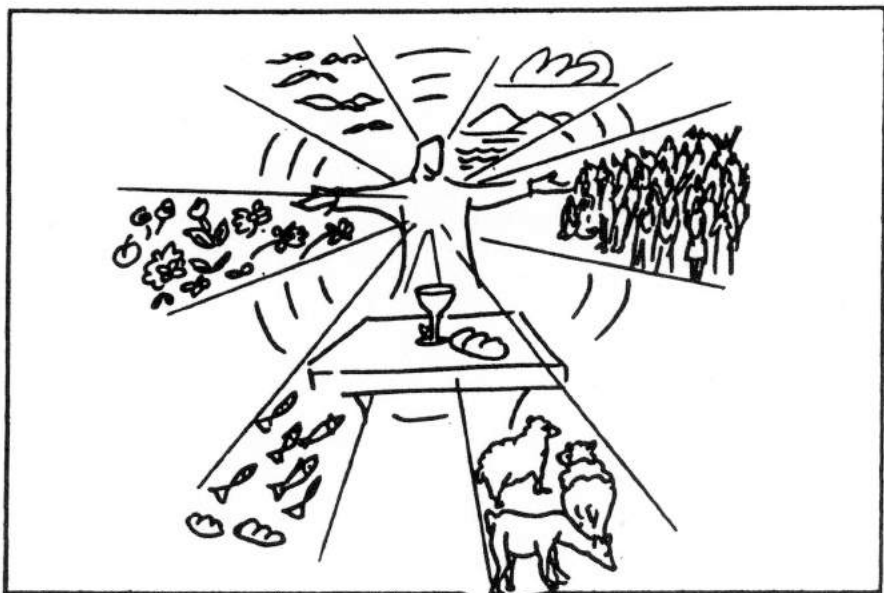
- It is God's plan that all people live well, have enough to eat and to drink and enjoy themselves.
- God created human beings in the image of himself (Gen 1,28). Together with him they should be creative, inventive and original. At the same time God expects his people to be co-responsible also for future generations. They also should live well, have enough to eat, good air to breathe and good water to drink!
- All created things are called to praise their creator! (Psalm 148). Therefore everything does not need to be "useful" in the sense of profit and money-making! Every flower and its beauty has its purpose in God's Kingdom.

3. In the Eucharist we celebrate God's "Kingdom Plan" with the whole of creation!

Think of the many things from nature which we see in the church. Remember also services or celebrations that bring creation into our church.

☞ *Form groups of 4/6.*

Discuss the question below the drawing on page 19.
Report after 3 minutes.



Question:

- *In what way is the whole of creation included in the Eucharist and in our church buildings ? --*

Supplement:

- The people of God are there.
- We use bread, wine, water, oil, salt, wax, metals, flowers and trees.
- In our harvest festivals we bring the fruit of the earth with joyful and grateful hearts.
- Especially in old churches and cathedrals we see the whole of creation engraved in stone, painted in pictures or chiseled out of wood. We can find flowers and animals decorating the church even in places where no human eye can see them. Their purpose is to be there for the praise of the creator!

4. Our co-responsibility to conserve nature and transform it

Conservation of nature does not belong to politicians and certain 'pressure-groups' only. It belongs also to God's "Kingdom Plan" for the whole of creation.

☞ *Discuss in the whole group:*

Question:

- *Where do we co-operate now already in the conservation of nature? --*
- *What is the "Kingdom Way" for us Christians of dealing with nature? --*

Supplement:

Pope John Paul II encourages us:

"Christians especially realize that their task in the sphere of creation, their duties towards nature and the creator - are part of their faith (and not only the interest of special groups or parties !). At the same time it opens for them a wide field of ecumenical and inter-religious co-operation."

(John Paul II: World Day for Peace, 1 Jan 1990.)

5. Prayer

Let us pray the "Our Father" which is our "Kingdom Prayer"! We pray that we may abandon the "world way" and adopt the "Kingdom Way" of forgiving, sharing and respecting all that has been created for us!

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."
