



## **C: A PARTICIPATORY CHURCH**

### **C/7**

# **A NEW WAY OF BEING CHURCH**

## **Is it really NEW?**

### **TOPICS OF ASIPA TEXTS:**

**A : GOSPEL SHARING (7 steps)**

**B : SMALL CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES**

**C : A PARTICIPATORY CHURCH**

**D : TRAINING FOR PARISH TEAMS**

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## C17

# A NEW WAY OF BEING CHURCH

## Is it really NEW?

A Community Bible retreat for starting SCCs

### **Prepare beforehand:**

- Bibles or printed texts for everyone.
- Sheets of newsprint or mahjong paper.
- Marker pens

## **INTRODUCTION**

The Church has been around for 2000 years. We are part of this Universal Church with its many sacred traditions. In 1990 the Bishops of Asia, gathered in the city of Bandung in Indonesia, spoke of 'A NEW WAY OF BEING CHURCH' in the 1990s. What did they mean? What is the old way? Is the New Way a better way of being church?

## **A. THE WAY WE WERE**

Larry, is a successful businessman. He came home one day very excited about meeting an old friend. He told his wife Isabel that he wanted to join a particular golf club, which would give him good contacts for his business. Isabel got a little worried about this new idea as she thought that Larry would be home even less than usual. She decided to talk to him about it. The next evening when Larry came home and they were having dinner she asked him.

Isabel: “Larry, do you remember what it was like when we first married? We said that we would be always there for each other and that what was important was our relationship?”

Larry: Yes, of course I remember. Those were wonderful times.

Isabel: Its not that I don't want you to enjoy your life and do better in business but we really do not need more money or things. What we need most of all is more time together so that you can enjoy your children growing up too. They need their father and I need a husband. I want us to grow closer together, have time to talk things out. We hardly have any time these days.

Larry: OK, I know what you are saying. I too want us to be a family that grows more loving with time rather than being strangers.

*Question for reflection in the whole group*

- 1. What is happening in this story?*
- 2. Why was Isabel asking Larry to re-think what was important?*
- 3. In our parish family have we forgotten our original purpose for being a parish?*

## Supplement

- Jesus gathered his disciples and created a community (the church) that would be a sign of his love and care for the world.
- God is three persons sharing life & love. We are made in God's image – a community meant to share life and love. We are called to love everyone as a brother and sister. To strengthen the family.
- Our parishes are so large these days that we need to find ways to grow in our relationships with each other since we all belong to the same family.
- It takes sacrifices and time to create a loving parish community that cares for all its members.

## **B. JESUS INITIATED THE NEW WAY OF BEING THE PEOPLE OF GOD.**

God chose the people of Israel to be his very own. He also chose them to be a light for all to see who God really is. If they lived the way God showed them, according to the covenant, God would lead them and guide them to safety.

We know from the account of the Old Testament that the people failed to follow the way God showed them over and over again. Their prophets and priests abandoned the ways of God Yahweh and made other gods to worship. The priests became very powerful and imposed a heavy burden of rules on the people. The relationship with God was weak. The people needed to be reminded once again of God's dream for them.

### **1. The New Way of Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew.**

- *In groups of 2/3.*
- *Take about 15 minutes*
- *Study the following texts from the Gospel of Matthew and answer the question:*

***What is the difference between the old way and the new way that Jesus proposed?***

	<b>Old Way</b>	<b>New Way</b>
1. Mt 5: 38-39		
2. Mt 5: 43-44		
3. Mt 6: 1-4		
4. Mt 6: 19-21		
5. Mt 7: 1-3		
6. Mt 20: 25-28		
7. Mt 23: 4-8		

## **2. Jesus our ‘Way’ in the Early Church**

Those who converted to Jesus were called followers of ‘The WAY’. What was this way and how did it look when it was lived out. Let us catch a glimpse of this ‘WAY’.

- *Groups of 2/3*
- *10 minutes*
- *Study the following texts. Answer the question:*

### ***What is the Gospel Way that we find in these texts?***

- *Using newsprint or white board or your own piece of paper, write a line from the text onto the newsprint which you believe is the Gospel or New Way to belong to God.*
- *Put up the newsprint sheets for all to see.*

**1. Acts 2:42-47   2. Acts 4:32-37   3. 1Tim5: 1-2   4. Rom 15:1-7**

**5. Col 3:5-12   6. Eph 4:25-32**

### **SUPPLEMENT**

*Read the supplement only if the lines from scripture written on the newsprint by the groups lack these points.*

1. They listened to the teachings of the apostles with eagerness.
2. They shared everything in common.
3. They praised God together everyday.
4. They accepted each other as sisters and brothers.
5. They were united in heart and mind.
6. They bore with the weak and made them grow strong.
7. They overcame division based on culture and other human factors and became one in spirit.
8. They forgave one another's failures and were reconciled with each other.
9. They respected elders and accepted all as brothers and sisters.
10. They spoke kind and good words, which built up and supported the community and its members.

### **C. THE ASIAN BISHOPS CALL US TO LIVE LIKE THE EARLY CHURCH**

In the call of the Asian Bishops to follow the New Way, the tone is much the same as that of the first Christians. The new way of the Asian Bishops is very much the way Jesus wanted us to be right from the start. Christianity is a way of life – a

way of seeing, accepting and relating to fellow human beings as children of the same God. It is a call to inner conversion leading to a removing of all human blocks to enduring love among all human beings. It is a call to embrace the spirit of Jesus in living life.

- *In small groups look at the six points below taken from paragraph 8 of the FABC Bandung statement.\**
  - *Write down beside each point the scripture text reference from B2 that relates to it.*
  - *Discuss the question that follows:*
  - *Read the whole text before doing the exercise.*
- “The church in Asia in the 1990s will have to become a communion of communities.*

1. Brotherhood and sisterhood of the children of God	Acts 4:32-37
2. The centrality of the Word	
3. A Participatory Church	
4. A witnessing and evangelizing Community	
5. A Prophetic sign of the Kingdom in the neighbourhood.	
6. Non-dominating leadership.	

***Questions for reflection***

- 1. Which of the six points can we find in our parishes or neighbourhoods?***
- 2. What are some of the ways we can strengthen each one?***



## **D. WE CAN EXPECT DIFFICULTIES**

The new way of life among those following the WAY of Jesus brought many problems and conflicts. There were enemies of Jesus everywhere and even within the community.

- *Take one text and read it carefully in each small group of 2/3.*
- *Identify the problem that faced the early church community.*
- *Answer the question:*  
***Do we have a similar problem today in our church and society?***
- *Report to the whole group after 12 minutes the problem you identified and how it is present today.*

**Acts 5:1-2** Annanias and Saphira hid half of the money they made from selling their land.

**Acts 6:1** The Greeks were neglected in the daily distribution.

**Acts 8: 1-3** The Church in Jerusalem is persecuted; house-to-house search for Christians took place.

**Acts 19:9** Some obstinate people chose to speak ill of the new way in the presence of the Assembly.

**Acts 19:23** Some serious disturbances broke out concerning the new way. It is good to read the whole episode (up to verse 29).

**Gal 2:1-5** Arguments among the apostles on circumcision.

**Gal 2: 11-14** Fight between Peter and Paul on Peter's lack of courage.

*Discuss in the whole group:*

- 1. What are the greatest challenges we face in following the New Way initiated by Jesus?***
- 2. What can we do to overcome these obstacles to becoming the people of God living the Gospel Way or New Way?***

## **CONCLUSION**

1. Ask each one to mention one feature of the ‘New Way of Being Church’ from the various scripture texts and supplements.
2. Pray a prayer of intercession so that we will be strong enough to help and support each other in bringing about the “NEW WAY OF BEING CHURCH”.

\* FABC – Federation of Asian Bishops’ Conferences – is the network of all the Bishops’ Conferences in Asia. They meet every four years. In 1990 they met in Bandung in Indonesia.

# 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."

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