



## **C: A PARTICIPATORY CHURCH**

### **C/9**

# **The Laity and their special mission Participation in what?**

### **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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Illustrated by Lee Kowling

## C\9

### **The Laity and their special mission Participation in what?**

#### **Prepare beforehand**

Five people to read the parts for the role play  
Time needed about 2 hours.

#### **Aim**

To help lay participants see their irreplaceable part in the church's mission.

#### **Introduction**

There is a feeling that the more we participate in Church services and tasks, the more we move towards a participatory Church. This need not be so. As a matter of fact, we get so busy in church activities that it may take us away from our main responsibility to our families and society. In the 1988 document on the Lay person's mission by John Paul II, it states that one of the greatest mistakes we have made in the church is that for many lay people there is little or no connection between their faith and their everyday lives in society, in their families and at their leisure.

How can we correct this mistake in our church and in our Small Christian Communities?

## **A. Our Experience**

During a diocesan level meeting of the SCC leaders, the participants shared on the progress they were making towards greater participation by lay people in the Church.

*Role-play (participants may want to add one or two more)*

1. Our assistant priest has started a new choir and there are 40 new members. They sing really well.
2. We have a wonderful prayer group. We meet every week and pray for 2 hours.
3. Our SCCs take turns to prepare the Sunday liturgy. All of us are involved in the preparation.
4. In my parish, we have a long waiting list of people who are willing to become lectors to read on Sundays.
5. We have started many bible study groups. We are just completing our fourth series. We meet weekly and have lots of homework to complete.

### ***Questions for reflection***

- a. What were the areas of participation mentioned?***
- b. Who is served by these activities? Who benefits?***

***Form groups of 2/3 and discuss.***

***Report after 6 or 7 minutes.***

### **Supplement**

- *All or most of the areas of participation mentioned in the role-play are concerned with the life of parish within the parish boundaries.*
- *The activities mentioned serve Catholics mainly*

### **B. What the Scripture says**

1. *In the whole group read the text from scripture: Luke 4: 16 - 18*
2. *Question for reflection:*
  - a. *What did Jesus say about his mission in this text?*
3. *Now read the text from scripture: Matthew 28: 28*
4. *Question for reflection*
  - a. *What does this text tell us about the mission of Jesus?*

### **Supplement**

- *The mission of Jesus was to heal, to liberate, to free us from sin and to bring about God's reign in our hearts and in our world. He wanted to show us how much God loves us.*
- *He sends us on this very same mission and promises to be with us through it all.*

### **5. What the Church teaches**

1. *Groups of 3/4*
2. *Choose one text and reflect on the following questions in your small groups.*
3. *Report to the whole group after 15 minutes.*

4. Questions for reflection:

- a) What can we know about the mission of the laity from the text?
- b) What does it mean for the laity to 'participate' in the church's mission?

1. "The Christian who neglects his duties in society neglects his duties towards his neighbour and even towards God and endangers his own salvation. Christians should rather be joyful that they can follow the example of Christ, who worked as an artisan" (*The Church in the Modern World, "Gaudium et Spes", GS, Vatican II, paragraph 45.*)

2. The laity by their very calling seek the kingdom of God by engaging in the affairs of the world and by ordering them according to God's plan. They live in the world, which means that they live in their professions and their jobs. They live in the ordinary circumstances of family and social life from which the very web of their existence is woven. (*The Church, "Lumen Gentium" LG Vatican II, paragraph 31*)

3. God's plan for the world is that people should work together to restore the world so that it can play a part in fulfilling God's plan. There are many aspects to our world: The good things of life, the prosperity of the family, culture, economic affairs, the arts, the professions, political institutions, international relations, and other matters... It is the task of the whole Church to work very hard so that all people may become capable of developing society and all creation so that it is directed towards God through Christ. (*Laity, Aduositatem Apostolicam, AA, Vatican II paragraph 7*)

4. Family life, their daily labours, their mental and physical relaxation, if carried out in the Spirit and even the hardships of life if patiently borne - ALL of these become spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. (cf 1 Peter 2:5). During the celebration of the Eucharist these sacrifices are most lovingly offered to the Father along with the Lord's body. Thus as worshippers whose every deed is holy, the lay faithful consecrate the world itself to God. (*The Church, LG, Vatican II, paragraph 34*)

5. Their own field of evangelizing activity is the vast and complicated world of politics, society and economics, as well as the world of culture, of the sciences and the arts, of international life, of the mass media. It also includes other realities, which are open to evangelization, such as human love, the family, the education of children and adolescents, professional work and suffering. (*Evangelization. Evangelii Nuntiandi, EN, by Pope Paul VI paragraph 70*)

### **Supplement**

- The mission of the laity is in the World and in the Church.
- The mission consists of turning back to God (making holy) everything we have and everyone we relate to during the course of our work, rest, prayer and suffering.
- The mission demands that we are fully involved in improving the world we live in and that means that we have to be in the midst of all activities that belong to politics, economics and social life.
- The mission of the Church is to be a sign of the love of God in the world.
- The mission of the laity and the mission of the church are one and the same. We have received this mission in our baptism from Christ.



## **Conclusion**

1. Discuss how, as a community and as an individual in our neighbourhood or at work or in the family we can take up more creatively and consciously our mission as lay faithful of Christ.
2. Pray and sing together. A hymn like 'Seek Ye First, the Kingdom of God' or 'Go Tell Everyone'.



# 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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