

E: Spiritual Formation

E\3

“Can you drink the chalice of suffering?”

(Mark 10: 38)

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Additional Session: How do we bear our sufferings? (Pgs 5-8)

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 E: Community Training Series

Spiritual Formation of Leaders

E\3

“Can you drink the chalice of suffering?”

Prepare beforehand:

Newsprint, felt tip marker pens.

Bibles for all participants

Copies of this text

Note to facilitators:

When welcoming the participants we announce the theme: leaders of a Christian community experience suffering in various ways. We introduce the topic in a few words, mentioning that we know that Jesus often told his disciples that they must be prepared to suffer, just as he himself would have to suffer. We want to study during this meeting what kind of suffering leaders have to expect and why. We do not explain more about the topic, in order not to give away the results of the following group-work

Introduction

In this session we would like to come to understand that a leader of a Christian community must be ready to suffer with Christ.

There are various circumstances that can cause you suffering:

- You may be one of the facilitators of Gospel Groups and you are disappointed because people show little interest.
- Or you are one of the readers of the parish and make many efforts to improve the way in which God’s Word is proclaimed, but others are too careless to cooperate.
- Or you feel totally discouraged by your own failures in bearing witness to your community.

There are many ways in which you have to suffer for taking up a role of service and leadership in the community.

Step 1. SUFFERINGS OF CHRIST AND OF A COMMUNITY LEADER

A. SCRIPTURE (40 mins)

1. Form Small groups of 3-5 persons.
2. Take two Bible texts per group.
3. Study the texts and answer questions 1-3 given below the texts.

4. Write down some of the important points on the newspaper provided.
5. Be prepared to report to the whole group on what you have learnt from your texts and discussions

Note to facilitators:

Groups which are experienced in biblical work can be allocated more texts. If there are many participants, do not make larger groups, but rather give the same texts to several groups. Each group should write its findings on newspaper

BIBLE TEXTS:

- | | |
|------------------|------------------|
| A) Mat. 26:36-54 | B) Lk. 19:41-48 |
| C) Mat. 17:14-23 | D) Mk. 3:20-30 |
| E) Mat. 12:46-50 | F) Mat. 20:20-28 |
| G) Mat. 10:34-39 | H) Mat. 26:69-75 |

Questions for discussion:

1. *What kinds of suffering did Jesus have to bear? List first those implied in the texts you are studying. Then list other kinds of sufferings of Jesus which you remember from other texts.*
2. *What kinds of suffering must leaders of a Christian community expect?*
3. *Must leaders of a Christian community expect to suffer more than the members of the community? Give reasons.*

Note to facilitators:

After all groups have reported, give time for comments on these findings. If you find it suitable at this stage, you can also ask what we have learnt from this study.

Step 2 WHY DOES GOD ALLOW THE SUFFERING OF HIS FRIENDS?

Let us ask ourselves this question: (for the whole group)

What could be the reason why God permits the suffering of those who fulfil a service to his Church?

Note to facilitator:

We encourage many answers, and have them written on newspaper. We do not answer ourselves, but encourage them to carry on finding more answers.

If there are doubtful answers or wrong ones, we ask the meeting how it feels about this answer. We try to avoid rejecting wrong answers ourselves, since it could discourage some participants. We try to correct wrong answers by putting a question which leads to the discovery of the mistake.

Summary

We realise that it will be impossible for us to come to a complete understanding why God permits suffering in this world.

All we can achieve is to find some indications of what God's plans are.

We are sure that God is with us in our suffering.

So that we can grow in our understanding, let us take the bible passages listed above for private reading, meditation and prayer.

We end with spontaneous prayer. Many are encouraged to pray.



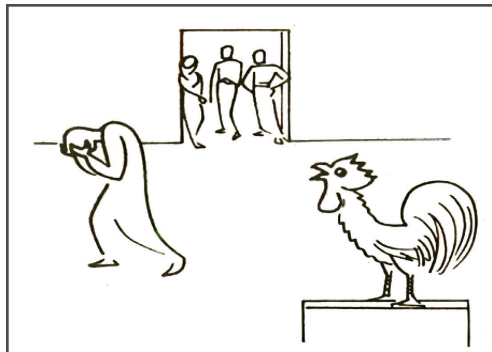
Additional Session

Introduction

In this extended session we would like to realize our typical reactions in times of suffering.

Step 1 HOW DO WE BEAR OUR SUFFERINGS?

- We sit in a circle.
- In a few words let us repeat the main findings of the first session.
- We would now like to look more closely at our individual reactions to suffering.
- Before we begin sharing, we read how one of the key men of the Church reacted to the idea of suffering.. Peter did not understand at first why Christ should suffer: Peter wanted to escape suffering and denied his master. He wept bitterly over his failure.
- We read **Mk 8:31-33**



Facilitator to explain:

Each of us reacts somehow differently to suffering. We will try to be very open with each other, and ask each one to share an incident which he or she can remember, where he or she had to bear one of the sufferings which were listed before. How did you react? Share with us your reaction, whether it was a wrong or a right reaction.

Important note to facilitator:

Now we invite sharing. We wait patiently, even if there are long periods of silence. We do not insist that each participant should share an experience.

It is possible that during this sharing nobody dared to mention our temptation to show off with suffering, or to let others see how much we are suffering, or to exaggerate our suffering to make others feel sorry for us, or to encourage self-pity. If these kinds of reaction to suffering have been left out, we do not accuse people of hiding them, but simply mention these possibilities calmly and in a "reporting" manner before concluding the sharing.

Summary

We have realized that there is much to be learnt. We are in many respects similar to Peter, who showed, in the text we read before, how little understanding he had of the place of suffering in the life of a leader of a Christian community.

Step 2 THE NEW WAY OF ACCEPTING SUFFERING

Let us now read from the same Peter, but from texts he wrote years later, when he had already understood much more how suffering fitted into the life of a Christian. Peter understood later why a leader of the Church will have to suffer as Christ himself suffered. His first letter was written many years after his failure.

SCRIPTURE (40 mins)

1. Form Small groups of 3-5 persons.
2. Take two Bible texts taken from the first letter of St Peter per group. The same texts may be given to many groups.
3. Study the texts and answer questions 1-3 given below the texts.
4. Write down some of the important points on the newsprint provided.
5. Be prepared to report to the whole group on what you have learnt from your texts and discussions.

- A. 1 Peter 1:3-9
- B. 1 Peter 2:18-24
- C. 1 Peter 3:13-17
- D. 1 Peter 4:1-6
- E. 1 Peter 4:12-19
- F. 1 Peter 5: 1-5

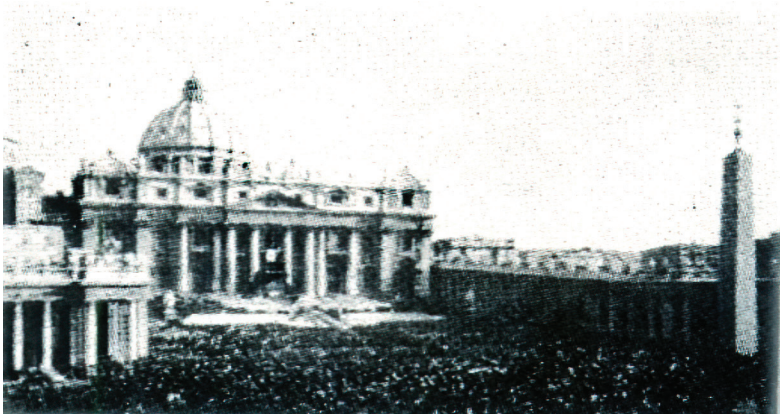
STUDY THE TEXT AND CONSIDER:

1. *What reasons does St Peter give to Christians for accepting suffering in their lives? Try to interpret exactly what St Peter says. Do not give your own opinion.*
2. *Some people will never object to anything wrong and will rather leave all injustice and suffering as it is. Is this what God wants us to do? Give your own opinion.*
3. *What is the difference between leaving hardships as they are and the Christian acceptance of suffering?*

Report-back:

Note to Facilitators:

1. *We give time for comments and discussion, since the opinions on question 2 could be contradictory.*
2. *Stimulating formed over a long time. They are not the result of one moment of questions may be added to the general discussion, such as:
"All our opinions and attitudes are our lives. Can we list a few of those things which created our attitude towards suffering?"
Or: "Some of our opinions change easily, others very slowly. Why do you think our attitude to suffering belongs to those which change very slowly?"
Or: "Since it is so difficult to adjust our attitude to suffering, what can we do? Can we list some realistic suggestions?"*



St Peter was bishop of Rome during the years of persecution. He was crucified outside the city of Rome. Today the church of St Peter is situated exactly above his grave.

CONCLUSION

Many texts of this session are suitable as a basis for our private bible meditation at home. Take one text at a time, read it slowly, listen in silence, and pray about it on your own.

The meeting is ended with a hymn and with spontaneous prayer.

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."