



E: Spiritual Formation

E\4

“Serve your brethren as I have served you.”

(John 13:15)

Additional Session (pgs 8 – 13)

Practical consequences of servant leadership

Adapted from Lumko No. 15M&P

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\4

“Serve your brethren as I have served you.”

Prepare beforehand:

Newsprint

Bibles for all participants

Copies of this text

Introduction

In this session we would like to gain a deeper understanding of the reason why leaders of the Christian community should acquire the attitude of serving others.

This attitude has probably been mentioned frequently and is not new to us in this formation programme. This is why we should concentrate on a deeper understanding. Besides this, a genuine attitude can only be formed out of inner acceptance and this in turn needs understanding.

Step 1. HOW A FOREMAN MAKES HIS AUTHORITY FELT

You were ordained deacon in your community. But you earn your daily bread like anybody else and you live like anybody else.

How should you relate to the community? Should you insist on an authority which you have? Should you behave as if you were equal to all the others?

Or you are the leader of an association. How should you relate to the members of the association? Should you show that you are more than the others?



What do we see in this photo?

We look at the photo of the building workers and their foreman above. We try in an informal way to answer the questions that follow.

Note to facilitator:

The trainer encourages more answers and different opinions. Write answers on newsprint.

Questions for reflection:

This foreman probably has a master above himself and has some workers under him.

1. How does he behave when he deals with the workers?.....
2. How does he behave when he deals with his master?....
3. How does his master make sure that he will respect his authority?
4. How does he himself make sure that the workers respect him?
5. Is it realistically possible to deal with each other in a different way in daily life?

Notes:

In public life those in authority want to defend and increase their authority in many ways through: different clothing (see photo) ; titles; threats; avoiding contact in private life; withholding information; insisting on respect; humiliating others; creating disunity among the subjects; using spies, etc.

Step 2 HOW JESUS TALKS ABOUT "AUTHORITY"

1. *We read Mt. 20:20-28. One reads and all others follow in their bibles.*
2. *We put this question to whole meeting: "How does this text compare with the life experience which we have just described?"*

Note to facilitator:

We allow many comments without guiding them towards any direction.

Even if comments are made such as: This is simply impossible in public life and in the business world", we hand the comment back to the meeting and do not interfere.

Step 3 WHY THE "FIRST ONE" SHOULD BE THE SLAVE OF ALL?

We will now try to understand why Christ makes such high demands, which seem so difficult to put into practice. We are looking for the deeper reason for his demands. We study the following drawing of the large circle with four smaller circles inside it.

Work in small groups for about 40 minutes.



WE READ each of the following five bible passages and ask ourselves for each passage:

1. To how many of the four drawings is each passage related? Explain.

Phil 2:1-11

John 13:1-16

1 John 1:3

Rev. 21:1-3

John 1:9-14

2. You notice that we connected the four drawings with one wide circle. What was the reason for doing so?

3. Can we now try to give some answers to the above question as to why Christ makes such difficult demands in Mt. 20:20-28?

Notes to facilitator:

Answer only question one if the groups need more time. Otherwise complete two or three questions. The answers should be written on newsprint, but for question one the answers would take too much space and it is sufficient to write only the numbers (to how many drawings).

Before the report-back we have a quick look whether all groups gave the answer “to all four drawings” for all bible texts. If some have answered “three” or less, we let these groups report first. If all groups have found that all texts are related to all pictures, then it would be boring to let all groups report all their findings. In this case we ask each

group to explain the relation of only one text to all pictures and allow the other groups to comment on these explanations.

If the groups have only worked on question 1, it may be wise to deal with questions 2 and 3 in plenary meeting.

Summary

- As followers of Jesus Christ we have to abandon the master-servant attitude to others, because God himself went beyond it himself in his relationship to us. His incarnation is the key to the answer. A "God-with-us" urges us to participate in his plan of making mankind a brother-hood.
- If God is a "God-with-us", then a leader of his witnessing community cannot be a "master-above others". If the whole church has the task to carry out God's plan, then this plan must first of all be carried out in the Church. And within the Church the leaders must be the first ones to put God's plan into practice.
- Connection of text of 1 John, or John 1, or Revelation to the pictures. The key word in this verse of 1 John is "Communion". How is "Communion with God" visible in the four pictures? If God wanted to be an emperor who rules from afar, would he then do the things depicted in the four pictures? Why not? Is it not dangerous for God's authority if he tries to be so close to us and to have "communion" with us?
- Let us read again Rev. 21:1-3 and John 1:9-14. We will now see that this is also the main idea of these two texts.

Conclusion

A LONG PROCESS OF SPIRITUAL GROWTH

It may be hoped that all this study will form a kind of basis for the long process of inner acceptance of the type of leadership which is needed in the Church and which is so different from government and business careers.

The process of spiritual growth is not completed, even if the above idea were completely understood. Spiritual growth is only starting. It has just received an improved basis. Therefore let us continue to speak to God about our experience with leadership, about our failures, about our hunger for respect, our pleasure in power over others, our fear of losing authority, our clashes with rivals, our loneliness, frustration, boredom etc. Let us from time to time, meditate on the bible texts in this session and pray about them.

Note to facilitator:

During the many technical training sessions or planning sessions with leaders it is always good to add a short gospel meditation or gospel sharing. For these some of the texts of this session can be taken or similar ones

Let us end our session with a prayer for perseverance and thankfulness.



Additional Session

Introduction

In this extension session we aim to become aware of the practical consequences of the ideal of being a leader by serving others.

If much time has passed since the first part of this theme, we ask several participants to sum up what we did at the last meeting.

Step 1 THE STORY OF AMBROSE

Someone please read for us the story of Ambrose.

Ambrose had been chairman of the Parish Pastoral Council for three years. He had fulfilled his task extremely well. For the first time ever the Council did not lose much time in useless discussions, because the meetings were always well prepared and the chairman had a pleasing way of asking the council members to avoid useless legal questions and to work for the good of the community. But now these three years were over. Ambrose had hoped in his heart he would be re-elected. However, just at that time the bishop had paid a visit to the parish. He made an impressive appeal to the community to distribute the tasks of the community to as many members as possible, not only to a few. He said that even highly talented Christians should step back after some time to give others a chance to use their charisms. The bishop said this in such a convincing way, that the people talked about his sermon for weeks. Just at that time new elections were held for the Parish Pastoral Council and the people did exactly what the bishop had said. They did not re-elect Ambrose, although he was the best candidate for the chairmanship. They elected instead Augustine, who was younger and less experienced and not as dynamic and pleasant as Ambrose. Ambrose was elected vice-chairman.

The first three meetings of the Parish Pastoral Council went off without anything special. Ambrose took part, but held back deliberately, because he did not want to embarrass the new chairman. But there was also this voice in him: "let them see that they made a weak choice."

Then came an important meeting of the council. The council was divided on the question of introducing bible groups or not. The day before the meeting Ambrose pondered about the coming meeting. How would the two different sides react? What arguments would they use? Where would they get lost? What would influence them? What would clarify the issue? His mind was used to watching and guiding the decision making process and so he could figure out where the difficulties would lie. Suddenly he realized that there was this excellent short statement of the bishop on bible groups. He had a copy of it, but the councillors did not have a copy. The new chairman had been asked to provide copies for each one, but had forgotten to make these copies. The meeting would end in confusion and perhaps in disagreement if there were no copies available and they could not be made at the last minute. Ambrose realised that he had the key to the success of the council meeting in his hands. He could make the copies now, or he could play the ignorant man who was not responsible for making the copies.

Ambrose also realized that on the last day Augustine might rush to him and ask for help. Then he had no other choice than to make the copies for him. Everybody would then think that Augustine had done his duty while in fact he had failed to do so. If the meeting became a success, it would be on account of Ambrose, while all the credit would go to Augustine. People would be misled into thinking highly of the ability of Augustine, while in fact he had proved a failure. Or should he make it known during the meeting that in fact the copies were made by him and not by Augustine? No, this would look like showing off. But then why should he spend several hours of the night copying these texts for somebody else?.....

Questions for reflection:

1. *What are your comments on the story?*
2. *What has the story to do with the Christian attitude of service?*

Step 2 HOW MEMBERS OF A COMMUNITY ARE SERVING OTHERS

Let us try to find out how this service-attitude could manifest itself in various situations.

1. *Work in groups of 5-8 people for 30 minutes. Each group will work on one of the tasks which we see below the photo of the gospel group.*
2. *Questions for reflection in small groups:*
What does it mean in practice to have the attitude of serving others? Let us describe a person who acts as one who serves the brethren. (Choose from Task A to D)
3. *Each group should first discuss freely how such an attitude of serving others could be lived concretely, e.g. by a chairman of the parish council etc.*

4. When you agree on an answer, write a short sentence or a key word on the newsprint, e.g. "gives others a chance to speak", "encourages shy people". Write several such sentences for each person whom you are describing.



TASK A

*Describe the chairman of the Parish Pastoral Council
Describe an ordinary member of a ministry or movement.*

TASK B

*Describe a member of the Parish Council.
Describe a president of a movement or ministry.*

TASK C

*Describe a vice-chairman of a Parish Pastoral Council.
Describe a member of the group of readers.*

TASK D

*Describe the one who conducts a session of a gospel sharing group.
Describe a participant of a gospel sharing group session who was the conducting person last week.*

Report on your assigned task.

Step 3 SERVING OTHERS CAN BE DIFFICULT

Discuss in the whole group the following questions E and F, unless these have already been clarified during the above group work.

Note to facilitator:

Do not be content with a quick answer, but ask some participants to describe in concrete examples what they mean. People have different ideas when they speak of a "strong leader" and of "firmness". Only a concrete example will clarify the issue.

- E) On what occasions or in what situations is it most difficult to have the attitude of one who serves the brethren?*
- F) Is it possible that somebody is truly serving the brethren while acting with firmness and as a strong leader? Explain.*

Step 4 WE CAN HELP EACH OTHER

Work in small groups for 20 minutes on question G and report to the whole group. Probably the realization of a common weakness and of a common challenge have made people ready to co-operate more intensely. Let us be more ready to co-operate.

- G) How can we help each other to detect our lack of Christian attitudes of serving others, and to grow in the right attitude?*

The meeting closes with a hymn and spontaneous prayer. Just as Jesus spent hours speaking to his Father about his task and about his difficulties.



*'Let me speak to my Father
when I am alone
I will talk to him
about my clashes with others
about my failures to serve others,
about my hunger for power,
and my fear of my rivals.*

*Father, I thank you
for allowing me
to participate
in your wonderful plans for man.'*

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."