F/1 (A) & (B)
The Vision of Community-oriented Ministries/Parishes

Adapted from Lumko No.10 Towards Non-dominating Leadership

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**

F\1(A)

"Serve your brethren as I have served you."

Introduction

Bishop Fritz Lobinger, the author of the book "Non-Dominating Leadership" begins the book with the story of St. Simon's community with a purpose to show that the animator needs a community vision and the skill to help the community to capture the vision. The visiting pastor of St. Simon's helped the community of St. Simon's to become "St. Peter's community", capable of witnessing to faith.

Studying this story can help one to carefully observe the steps taken to help the community of St. Simon to move from being a passive, helpless and poor community to an active agent of the gospel.

A) Read and discuss St. Simon's Story.

- *Form Groups of 5-6 persons (60 minutes)*
- *Group's Task: Read the story of St. Simon's given below*
- *Discuss the following questions:*

1. *What vision of community does the visiting pastor of St. Simon's community have?*
2. *What steps taken by the pastor helped the community of St. Simon's to capture the vision?*
3. *What is your learning from the growth of St. Simon's community about facilitating the growth process of your community?*

B) Report and discuss your findings in the whole group & summarise the points (30 minutes)

STORY: The Congregation of St. Simon

Phase One: Total Dependence
When I came into closer contact with the congregation of St. Simon, it had about one thousand Catholics. It was a Xhosa community, in the hilly country near the Indian Ocean. The congregation was first evangelized and founded almost fifty years ago.

At the time when I had to serve this congregation as a priest from time to time,

without being in charge, it had its lay pastor, the "Catechist". He was born in this village and was one of its early converts. He was employed full-time for visiting and encouraging the Catholics, for inviting others to convert and join the Church, for instructing the catechumens and the catholic children, for conducting the prayers for the sick, for leading the burial services in the absence of the priest, and for any other leadership tasks needed in this congregation.

After several Sundays I found it strange that at each Sunday Mass it was the catechist who read the first lesson. So I spoke to him in a friendly way and asked him whether it would not be an advantage to invite also others to read the lesson. "What?" he replied with great surprise, " do you think there is anybody who can read the lesson?" I told him that among such a number of Christians there must surely be some who could do this. But he was sure there was nobody and so things remained as they were.

While I was away from this congregation for some time, I heard that the catechist got into trouble. He disliked the decision of the Parish Council that his wife, too, should take part in the sweeping of the little Church, and in his anger he tried to dissolve the whole Council. This misfired and it somehow led to his being removed from office. He found some other employment in the city.

Phase Two : Dominating and Monopolistic Tendencies
It was less than a year later that I had to help out again on Sundays, and to my surprise there was another man now, who not only read the lesson, but who also organized the singing and read announcements at the end of the service. Again I enquired from some people in the casual way in which a visiting priest asks such questions, and was told that this man came back from years of absence in the big cities. When he saw that he could do something useful he just stepped in. There was nobody to ask and everybody was glad that something was done, and so he went ahead and everybody was happy with it.
The happiness ended when after some months the new man failed to turn up. There was no reader and instead of the first lesson there was a long silence, because I, too, just looked to the ground and did not read the lesson. I only read the gospel after the long silence.

Phase Three: First Communal Appointments
At the end of that Mass I took a step which is unusual for a visitor who is not in charge, I asked the congregation to meet briefly after Mass. I asked them how they felt about the incident of the missing lesson. One after the other expressed sadness and disappointment. They wanted to solve the problem and asked who could read the lesson, especially whether ladies, too, were allowed to read it. I explained that this was certainly possible and that it was entirely up to them to decide. They made a list of thirty readers at that very meeting, and it has worked fairly well until today.

Phase Four: The First Team
At few months later I had to help again for some Sundays and I noticed to my great joy, that there was not only one man in the sacristy to vest and to accompany me to the altar, but there were five, and the second one who had disappeared for some months because he had been spiritually tired, was also among them. It went on for many Sundays. But after a few months there were only two of those men left to serve every Sunday at the altar, while the others were in the pews among the congregation. When I enquired carefully from them, I realized that they were given indications that they were not needed. They were not happy about this, but found it better not to create tensions by insisting on being included.

I approached the two men and asked them whether it would not be good to have more men at the altar and to gather them all as a little group after Mass in order to give them training for their service at the altar. My question was not welcome, and the counter-question came in a strong voice: "But is there anybody who could be trained besides us two? Where are they?" I persisted in my suggestion, repeating it the following Sunday, and by now I had received assurance from the Church authorities that I would be welcome to give training to this group of men.

When the two men realized that I was convinced that it was preferable to have more men at the altar, they were ready to co-operate. They changed easily and I did not have to insist on my suggestion in any way, and did not have to refer to any authority. They invited the others in a friendly way to join them. The whole group stayed on every Sunday to receive some training. The brief relapse into a monopolistic spirit did not occur again until today, although it is of course possible at any time to fall into the same mistake again. I must say that I admire the good spirit in which the two men, who are the stronger characters and the most educated among them, are co-operating with the others. They patiently attend the training sessions, although they could often try to opt out when the others take so long to understand.

Phase Five : Definite Ministry
More than a year later I heard that the parish centre had decided to train men to be officially installed for distributing Holy Communion. The two men were among them. The Church Council of St Simon had agreed to their nomination and it was clear that the whole congregation was accepting them wholeheartedly. The two men were officially installed, together with several men of other communities of the neighbourhood.

Phase Six: Neighbourhood Communities
Not long afterwards one of the two men came to me, full of enthusiasm, and explained to me that it would be a good idea to have many small "groups" in the congregation. He was keen to put the idea to the whole congregation, and I was

only too glad to be asked to assist. I showed him literature about "Small Christian Communities" and he immediately saw that this was the idea which he had meant, without putting it into these words. In several meetings the idea was explained to the whole congregation and, when they accepted the idea, many meetings were held in the villages to establish five Small Christian Communities. The people themselves knew immediately in which neighbourhoods they should be meeting and so the effort was based on a natural foundation.

The communities began to undertake tasks of helping neighbours in need, and Church-tasks such as catechesis to children. Training sessions had to be held for the women who taught catechism, and for those who conducted the gospel-sharing.

When after six months most communities stopped meeting weekly, the people got together and devised a plan how to revive them. They also began to establish two or three new communities.

Phase Seven: A Community of Communities
The people now saw the need for regular contact between the seven or eight communities. They changed the Church-Council to include now a representative of each of the communities. At each meeting of the Council they had to give a short report of their activities. This step kept their communities alive and initiated an increased flow of ideas between them. They began to feel that they were acting as a Community of Communities. The Sunday liturgy was prepared in turn by one of the communities.
At the same time this step made it easier for ideas to emerge from anybody in the community, and the small teams of strong leaders were no longer the only ones who took initiatives.

Phase Eight: The Dream of Communities Who Feel Responsible for the World
From here on the story continues as a dream, because this is how far things have gone until today in this community. It is an existing community, and everything has happened as I told. I have only changed its name and have instead called it "St Simon", because Simon had the potential of becoming Simon Peter.
The Church Council heard of the examples of other parishes which not only cared for Church-¬issues, but also for issues of society and of the world around them. The Council was confused through these reports and studied this question. It decided to confront the whole community with this theme, and it was considered in many sessions of the neighbourhood communities, as well as in the Sunday liturgies. After initial hesitation the majority of the people saw that their faith did in fact urge them to take responsibility for problems of the world around them.

The first projects to be undertaken concerned the immediate surroundings of each community. Some began repairing the road leading to their area, others improved

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the water-system, and again others helped the neighbours to come together again to continue the broken-down discussions on the division of grazing areas.

Most of these small projects had some good results and this created a sense of confidence. The Church-Council urged the communities to look for other issues which needed their attention. The communities were given the task: List the most pressing problems, felt by most people of this area, and select one which can be dealt with in co-operation with other Churches and other groups.

Phase Nine: The Universal Church
Around this time neighbouring parishes also began to develop a community spirit in the congregations, and to train leaders for the various tasks. The leaders of St Simon participated in diocesan meetings and in diocesan training programmes. This gave them new ideas, and it also helped them to see that they did not develop in isolation. The whole Church was moving in a similar direction. They also realized that their community was a part of the Universal Church. They were able to contribute to this wider Church and also to listen to it. Unity was not only a question of the members of each little group, but also of the many Local Churches.

Phase Ten: Community Versus Domination
At several earlier stages the problem had arisen that some leaders wished to do things alone, to establish a monopoly, and to obtain some kind of privilege in this way. Again and again the community had to counter these attempts. Many people emphasized that they wanted everybody to have a say and everybody to use his charisms. But others said that they found it good if leaders had special rights and were very different from the others. And, at the same time, we have the masses who just accept this evil of domination by some and have given up their right to say what they feel.

In reflecting together they found that it is God himself who is most strongly against this kind of life. He is the creator of all, the creator of human dignity, the one who wants to make us one big family of God, the Church. What we need is a combination of real community and non-dominating leadership everywhere: in the town-offices, in the factories, in the political parties, and in the Governments of our countries.

It was obvious that communal responsibility was the real alternative to any domination by a few. But the spirit and the techniques of communal responsibility had first to be learnt on the level of small face- to-face communities. The new challenge was how the many neighbourhood communities of St Simon show by their example how they create a feeling of belonging to each other, voice their opinions, and feel jointly responsible for its life and mission.
It was also clear that the ideal of each member assuming an equal share in policy-

making and decision-making was only possible if there was a rather equal faith-conviction among the members of the community.. Therefore the congregation of St Simon launched a long-term programme of deepening the gospel conviction in the communities.

All training programmes for leaders were now adapted to this new overall goal. They did not only aim at giving leaders some skill and knowledge, but also the ability to animate communal responsibility among all members of the congregation. Periodic analysis and discussions on social issues and needs of their neighbourhood helped these communities to balance their missionary thrust in the church and in the society. This would help them to see that they had to serve this society through developing alternative ways of ministering and co-responsible leadership.

The Next Phase....
There will be a next phase, but it cannot be said what it will be. There will be another need emerging which has to be answered. Different signs of the times will appear, demanding a new way in which the Church should serve the world.

C) Summary

- ※ The story confirms that every community can be animated if the leader is a good animator.

- ※ The leader needs to have a community vision and facilitative skills to help the community to capture the vision. The leader has to let go his need to control and tendency to think that his idea is the best and help the community to feel confident in themselves.

- ※ It is a very special skill to be able to propose the right steps to the next stage of enabling of a community from its existing situation. Wrong analysis will lead to wrong solutions.

- ※ One cannot ask the group to jump a stage it needs to go through and hope for fast growth.

- ※ The leader has to be very patient and caring, and at times challenging the community to grow.

- ※ Leadership in the new way of being church is empowering, enabling, facilitating. Leaders have a chance to practice and experience these qualities of leadership in every situation.

F/1 (B)
WHERE ARE WE GOING?

Introduction

The study of St. Simon's community showed that although it was a very poor community in terms of organization and weak in faith and the pastor being only a care-taker, working with their good will and believing in simple opportunities available in the community can work wonders.

A. CASE STUDY OF THE CONGREGATION OF ST. SIMON

Read the following description and discuss the questions that follow:

Phase One: Total Dependence

At the time when I had to serve this congregation as a priest from time to time, without being in charge, it had its lay pastor, the "Catechist". He was born in this village and was one of its early converts. He was employed full-time for visiting and encouraging the Catholics, for inviting others to convert and join the Church, for instructing the catechumens and the catholic children, for conducting the prayers for the sick, for leading the burial services in the absence of the priest, and for any other leadership tasks needed in this congregation.

After several Sundays I found it strange that at each Sunday Mass it was the catechist who read the first lesson. So I spoke to him in a friendly way and asked him whether it would not be an advantage to invite others to read the lesson also. "What?" he replied with great surprise, "do you think there is anybody who can read the lesson?" I told him that among such a number of Christians there must surely be some who could do this. But he was sure there was nobody and so things remained as they were.

While I was away from this congregation for some time, I heard that the catechist got into trouble and left.

Phase Two: Dominating and Monopolistic Tendencies

It was less than a year later that I had to help out again on Sundays, and to my surprise there was another man now, who not only read the lesson, but who also organized the singing and read announcements at the end of the service. When he saw that he could do something useful he just stepped in. There was nobody to ask and everybody was glad that something was done.

The happiness ended when after some months the new man failed to turn up. There was no reader and instead of the first lesson there was a long silence, because I, too, just looked to the ground and did not read the lesson. I only read the gospel after the long silence.

Discuss in buzz groups for 4 minutes and answer:

1. **What do you think about the approach of this community to its problems? How did they try to solve their problems?**

2. **Would you suggest any different way to address the problem St. Simon's is facing?**

Supplement

Often pastoral workers are busy fixing day-to-day issues and forget about the long-term goals of faith communities. The solutions worked out for daily problems do not actually solve the problem on account of its shortsightedness. Eg. When one catechist who dominated the community left, they found another one who also did everything by himself.

B. SCRIPTURE REFLECTION

Working in groups of 5-6, use one the following texts and answer the following questions:

a) Jn. 15:9-15   b) Jn. 13:1-17   c) 1 Cor. 3:1-9

1. **What attitude formation is being shown in the text you reflected on?**

2. **According to you, how important is it to form leaders?**

Supplement

※ Humility, service, readiness to serve others without expecting any return.

※ Willingness to lay down one's life for others.

※ Treating others as equals and friends.

※ Not competitive but collaborative so that the community grows and matures steadily; leaders do not cause division in the community.

C. TRANSFORMING A CONSUMER CHURCH TO A COMMUNITY CHURCH

The consumer mentality of a church community occurs when they just focus on following rigidly certain rituals and on fixing daily problems and trying to survive. People simply receive from one dominant leader. There is no long term vision or goal of community formation and empowerment. Passive communities will continue in the same way and its leaders will remain dominating leaders. The question for our reflection now is how we can help the consumer Church to become the community Church where all are actively involved in the work of evangelization.

Discuss in buzz groups for 5 minutes:
Which of the following or other consumer attitudes do you find in your church?

1. Valuing efficiency more than participation.

2. People are passive and a great many are disinterested or not concerned about the community.

3. Competitive mentality among the people and church personnel, often leading to non-cooperation or support of the other.

4. Focusing on making more money all the time.

5. Secular values and professions are given more importance than living one's faith.

6. Rich and influential people are received well and the poor are often neglected.

7. Fast and brief rituals and prayers.

8. Converting Sacramental celebrations into socializing events.

9. Always craving for better comforts, position and honour and not loving service.

10. Becoming power and authority centres, looking down on others.

11. Disinterest in gospel values, such as honesty, justice, truth, loving service, care of the poor, etc.

12. Others …..

Discuss in the whole group (7 minutes):
What can we do to help the consumer community to become a more active community?

Note to facilitator:
After hearing many people's views, continue:
"Let us now look into some ways we can help the community to grow."

1. **Successful Starting Points for a New Beginning:**
   a) A desire for increased co-operation and reflection > In the story St. Simon's above, we saw that the visiting pastor called for more volunteers to read. So more people came forward to read.

b) Increased liturgical cooperation and reflection .> Again in the same story, it is a call to increased liturgical cooperation which began the transformation of the community.

c) Increased catechetical cooperation > Trying to involve many people in giving catechism and adult faith formation will lead to increased participation of people.

d) A desire for community, leading to action > We can respond to the desire for community and cooperation and allow that to shape the community.

e) A desire to learn more about the Word of God and action which will help the community to grow around the Word.

2. Conducting Awareness seminars
Another way to lead communities to transformation is regular awareness seminars which will lead to better understanding and participation.

D. IMPORTANCE OF LEADERSHIP BUILDING
Community building and leadership building go hand-in-hand. If any one aspect is left out, it will hinder the growth of community. If only leaders are trained, they will become dominating leaders and if only the community is formed without leaders, it will lead to confusion as things change.

1. Why select leaders
Discuss in the whole group (7 minutes)
  a) Do we need trained leaders in communities? Give reasons for your answer.
  b) What happens if the leaders are not trained?

Supplement
- It is true that the selection of a few can be harmful. But they can be guided to develop community animation skills and accompanied in their growth.

- Neighborhood communities have a great need for leaders. Without leaders community will be left in a vacuum. Facilitating different activities, addressing various problems and keeping the community together are all leadership roles.

- The selection of some leaders is unavoidable since all cannot be leaders.

- We must prepare local leaders even for key responsibilities.

- Continuous training is key to providing good leadership for guiding ongoing growth of the community.

2. Importance of Training
Discuss in the whole group (7 minutes):
Why is training important for the community and its leaders?

Supplement
- Training enables people to use the gifts of the Spirit
- Training helps the gifts of the Spirit to grow
- Training gives all members of Christ's Body a chance
- Training many people makes the Church a sign of equality
- Training liberates people
- Training makes people free to become creative
- Training is part of our task of evangelization
- Training is part of that process of transformation
- Training liberates the existing leaders
- Training puts the focus on the local parish.

E. PRACTICAL CONCLUSION:
a. Work in small groups of 4-5. Discuss the two questions following and report after 20 minutes.

    1. Are our leaders in the community well trained?
    2. In what areas they need further training?

b. Read John 15: 9-15
c. Keep about 2 minutes or so of silence,
d. End with a 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."