

## Revisiting the Kingdom of God\_

1. **“Seek FIRST the Kingdom of God and its righteousness and . . . (Matt.6:33)**

2. From Kingdom, to New Reign of God, to Basileia, to Kingdom, to The Companionship of Empowerment.

*“If separation is not the ideal, but connection is; if dualism is not the ideal but the relational embrace of diversity is; if hierarchy is not the ideal but mutuality is; then the companionship model more closely approximates reality. It sees human beings and the earth with all its creatures intrinsically related as companions in a community of life. Because we are all mutually interconnected, the flourishing or damaging of one ultimately affects all.” (Elizabeth. Johnson)*

3. Discipleship in service of the New Companionship:

a) *In obedience even unto death, follow after the ecclesiastical Jesus like a docile child*  
b) ***I do not call you servants, but friends, adult co-disciples serving and earthing the Companionship of Empowerment***

4. ***Getting relationships right seems to be the heart and soul of this new empowerment.***

Jesus detheologizes religion, making people search for the will of God not only in holy books but principally in daily life; he demythologizes religious language, using the expressions of our common experiences; he deritualizes piety, insisting that one is always before God and not only when one goes to the temple to pray; he emancipates the message of God from its connection to one religious community and directs it to all people of good will; and finally, he secularizes the means of salvation making the sacrament of relationship a determining element for entry into the Kingdom of God. (Leonardo Boff (1980), *Jesus Christ, Liberator*, p.98)

5. ***Church = Servant and Herald of the Kingdom.***

The kingdom of God is not a single act but continuing action, entailing a response and participation by the people. The kingdom is not God's intervention to end an abandoned world but God's active participation in a continuing world- transforming process. In that process personal wholeness is an integral part of social renewal; the well-being of persons is integrally related to the well-being of society. Jesus' use of a banquet or feast to symbolize the kingdom, following a widespread tradition in Israel, suggests the restoration of the people as a new covenant society. (David Kaylor, *Jesus the Prophet*, (1994), 89-90).

***Church as Catalyst for an Empowering Community***

*“Rather than putting the institutional Church at the centre of Christian life and working to “plant the Church” by conversions, the Bishops propose that the Church’s mission to proclaim Christ can best be carried out by the proclamation of the Kingdom of God, the reign of God’s compassionate justice and peace.”*

**(Asian Bishops, 1990)**

*“It used to be that people were born as part of a community and had to find their place as individuals. Now people are born as individuals and have to find their community.”*

Bill Bishop.

1. Gospel empowerment is mediated first and foremost through dynamic community engagement: Acts 2:44-47; 4:32-37

2. The Prophetic Shift: From outstanding individuals to outstanding communities. It is in and through communities that the right relationships of the new Companionship are brought about.

3. Christian community serves four main purposes

- Grounding God’s unconditional love in daily life; mediating a quality of love above and beyond the normal conventional channels through which love and friendship are mediated. This quality of love is sometimes described as agapaic.

- Creating a facility for ongoing discernment – to listen and respond more authentically to the lure of the Holy Spirit.

- Structuring the networks and organisms through which the compassionate justice of God is made manifest in the world (Gospel liberation).

- Facilitating growth into healing and wholeness - through empowering rituals.

4. Ecclesial evangelization today: Young People  
Adults coming of age  
Wise Elders.

5. *Spirituality’s Paradigm Shift:*

- From individual salvation beyond to communal empowerment as Earthlings

- From the individualized Holy Spirit to the indigenous Great Spirit.

***Ritual and Empowering Community***

1. At all times: Seek FIRST the Companionship of Empowerment (cf. Matt. 6:33).

- How to create and maintain an understanding of Church as community

- How to cultivate a culture of empowerment.

- How to educate for leadership from the ground up.

2. Historical context: - Ritual-making

– Rites of Passage

– Sacraments.

3. Sacraments as Communal rituals – as rituals that empower

4. Liturgy as empowering ritual, and not primarily about the protection of rubrics.

5. What would a process of EVANGELIZATION rather than SACRAMENTALIZATION look like?

**Discussion:**

a) Share examples of parishes where you felt empowering Christian community was at work?

b) Alternatively can you name other communal structures that evidenced such empowerment?

c) Can you name examples of Sacraments being celebrated as empowering rituals?

d) Can you cite non-sacramental examples of empowering ritual?

e) In a parish context, can you envisage a renewal programme shifting the emphasis from Sacramentalization to Evangelization? What would be some of the ingredients and strategies?