



Our Group Journey Exploring Interculturality

Exploring Interculturality and Religious life

Resource Guide

CRA Interculturality Committee

21/4/2022

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FRATELLI TUTTI: A PRAYER TO THE CREATOR

GOD OF OUR HUMAN FAMILY,
YOU CREATED ALL HUMAN BEINGS EQUAL IN DIGNITY:
POUR FORTH INTO OUR HEARTS A FRATERNAL SPIRIT
AND INSPIRE IN US A DREAM OF RENEWED ENCOUNTER,
DIALOGUE, JUSTICE AND PEACE.
MOVE US TO CREATE HEALTHIER SOCIETIES
AND A MORE DIGNIFIED WORLD,
A WORLD WITHOUT HUNGER, POVERTY, VIOLENCE AND WAR.

MAY OUR HEARTS BE OPEN
TO ALL THE PEOPLES AND NATIONS OF THE EARTH.
MAY WE RECOGNIZE THE GOODNESS AND BEAUTY
THAT YOU HAVE SOWN IN EACH OF US,
AND THUS FORGE BONDS OF UNITY, COMMON PROJECTS,
AND SHARED DREAMS.

AMEN.

This prayer is from Pope Francis' Encyclical Fratelli Tutti, which was published on 4 October 2020.

Interculturality is the sustained interaction of people raised in different cultures, generations, religious perspectives and other dimensions of difference.

The focus is on relationship building, deep connections, interaction, mutual gifting, respect and learning from one another.

It is how we are transformed, shaped and molded by the life of others.

Adapted from A Gittens, svd.



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Scripture	Prodigal Son Lk 15:11-32	Zaccheus Lk 19:1-10	Woman at the Well Jn 4:1-42	Road to Emmaus Lk 24:13-35	Syrophonician woman Mk 7:24-30	Good Samaritan Lk 10:25-37	Acts 2:1-4	Lk 9:1-6 Sending the 12	1 Cor 12:12-14
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Practical activity	Personal Names or Wisdom of my people (SSC booklet)	Family Table	Bafa Bafa	Analyzing cross cultural incidents – Red Flags	Discrimination and What we want you to hear? Section 3 p 10 11	A Survey of Your congregation	What did you say? Idioms Hand gestures	Developing your own theology of intercultural ministry	
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1 Exploring Interculturality – What is it?

Video

<https://vimeo.com/321356247>

Scripture Passage

Prodigal Son Lk 15:11-32

Reading

Intercultural Life as a Sign of Prophetic Hope - Part 1

Sr. Adriana Carla Milmanda, SSpS



Sr. Adriana Carla Milmanda is a member of the Missionary Congregation of the Servants of the Holy Spirit and current Provincial Superior of her province of origin: South Argentina. She is a Bachelor and Professor of Theology at the Pontificia Universidad Católica Argentina, and she obtained a Masters in Intercultural Studies and the Bible at CTU (Catholic Theological Union) Chicago, USA. She has accompanied and worked mostly on projects designed for the promotion and empowerment of young people and women in situations of socio-economic vulnerability, both in Argentina and in the Fiji Islands, in the South Pacific. Since 2013, she has been part of an international committee that, in conjunction with the Society of the Divine Word, develops programs intended to raise awareness and to form the members of their Congregations as well as others who require it for Intercultural Life and Mission.

Original in Spanish

Dear Superiors General,

It is an honour for me to be speaking today before you, who are the representatives of so many Congregations and so many Sisters dispersed throughout the whole world. This is certainly a situation and an experience that I never imagined, and I appreciate the confidence that the UISG shown me by inviting me. I, therefore, thank the organizers for granting me this honour, and I thank God for making my adolescent dream of “reaching the ends of the world” a reality. God, sooner or later, fulfills our deepest dreams... though in His own way and in His own time!
... Instead of reaching every corner of the earth, He brings those corners to me, through you and so many other encounters that I have lived because of the theme of intercultural life and mission, which I have been deepening in a special way for a few years now.

As a Missionary Servant of the Holy Spirit, I belong to a Congregation where multicultural and international life and mission are an essential part of our founding history and of our charism. However, my particular interest in this topic was really sparked by my personal experience of joy, frustration, pain, and learning when I was sent to launch a new missionary presence in the Fiji Islands (in the Pacific). We belonged to our Congregation’s Australian province, and I had to live—in a span of 5 years—in community with Sisters from Papua New Guinea, Germany, Indonesia, India, Benin; and I am from Argentina. Most of the time, we were only 2, and only one remained for

2 years. At the same time, we were advancing on our path in a country that, in turn, is composed of the local population and an almost numerically equal group of people who have come from India. Motivated by this experience, full of joy, discoveries, pain, misunderstandings, frustrations, and much learning, I then decided to study the topic of cultures and mission from the academic viewpoint in order to process and learn from the experience that supports me in the present situations and encourages me as I look towards the future.

Contact and exchange between cultures of the most diverse corners of the world are increasing and being imposed on us in a progressively accelerated way. Favored by our globalized era's means of communication and transportation, today, there are indeed very few groups that remain isolated from contact with others. The phenomena of migrations and massive displacements that are compulsive or provoked by violence, the climate change, political or religious persecution, poverty, xenophobia or the lack of opportunities, means that every day millions of people are moving from one side of the world to the other.

In the last 20 years, multiculturalism and interculturality have become a cross-cutting issue that is debated in fields as varied as education, health, philosophy, and the business world, among others. At the theological level, we have been concerned for many years with the "inculturation" of the faith, the Gospel, the liturgy, the missionaries, and so on. Inculturation answers the question of how to incarnate the faith, shared by the missionaries coming from the "outside" or "ad-gentes," in the local culture in such a way that the transmitted faith can become part of the local culture and be expressed through the symbolism, values, and imagination of that culture. This question responded to an ecclesial context where the mission was predominantly one-directional: from the "evangelized" countries to "non-evangelized" countries or pagans (as they were called). Today, the reality is much more complex and multidirectional, so that in missiology we have already begun to speak of the Church's "inter-gentes" mission (instead of ad-gentes) and of inter-culturation, which, without cancelling the still existing challenge of inculturation, incorporates the challenges and opportunities of the new multidirectional context in the world and the Church today.

Through the consecrated life, called to be at the margins of the Church, this reality also reaches us, makes us move, impacts us... within our communities and beyond, in the mission and the apostolates. However, I am convinced that we have a "treasure" of lived experience of which we are not even aware. Many of our Congregations were already at the forefront of multicultural life for nearly a century before the world started talking about it. For others, the experience is more recent. However, it is this capital of experience and knowledge that we are called today to share with one another and to put at the service of humanity and the Church. On the other hand, in order to capitalize on this wealth of experience, we are challenged to open up to the tools that other, more specific fields are developing on the basis of philosophical thought, communication sciences, education, sociology, etc.

This combination of life experience, theological reflection, and the indication of possible tools is what I am going to try to present today in the short time that we are going to share. Can intercultural life become one of the seeds of the prophetic hope that we, as consecrated women, want to sow in today's world? I am convinced that the answer to this question is positive and that it is urgent for each of our Congregations and the entire Church to consider it.

Yet, the most pressing issue, about which most Congregations are concerned, is how to live it and how to do it. I will, therefore, try to present this topic in four steps:

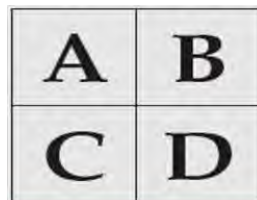
1. Clarification of the concept of interculturality and related concepts
2. How to live in an intercultural key

3. The weakness and power to become a sign
4. The urgency of an intentional choice based on prophecy and for hope

1. The Concept of Interculturality and Related Concepts

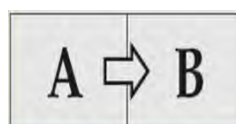
We cannot approach the concept of interculturality without clarifying other terms that are related and/or frame what interculturality means and proposes:

Multiculturalism: When we talk about a multicultural group, event or life, we are highlighting the fact that its participants or members come from different cultures; for example, a parish, a company, a city, and even a country, can be multicultural. To emphasize the fact that people also come from different nationalities, we will say that the group is multicultural and international. However, this fact, in itself, does not imply any relationship or interaction between its members. I can live my whole life in a city inhabited by neighbours of different cultural origins, but this will not necessarily lead me to want to learn their language, taste their food, understand their values, etc. Using a diagram, we could represent the situation as follows:¹



Trans-cultural experience: Now, let's say that a person of culture "A" decides to move to the neighbourhood of culture "B." The person would be going into a cross-cultural experience. Note that we are talking about a "move" for a certain extent in time and not a mere tourist visit. The move, in this example, implies a degree of commitment and risk that is not assumed when we are just passing through and consider ourselves tourists, visitors, explorers or, at worst, conquerors or colonizers...

On a diagram, it would look like this:



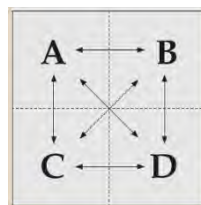
This experience of learning and adapting to another culture, different from the one in which we have been socialized, is called acculturation. Acculturation is, in itself, a challenging and enriching experience once we have overcome the stages that normally occur to a greater or lesser degree, depending on the magnitude of the cultural difference and a person's personality and/or preparation. In general, these stages go from a first idyllic love of the "different," to a deep rejection of that same "difference," until a balance is reached between the appreciation for the qualities and the recognition of the shadows of the other culture and of one's own.

When that balance is not reached, a person risks being stuck in a dream that does not correspond to reality (Sisters who "maternalize" the assumed culture and, then, act and speak of "them" as "poor little ones..." or who are unable to develop relationships with the local people, while all their friends and references continue being, despite the passing of time, those of their place of origin and they maintain excessive contact with them and/or with the news from home). Or, on the contrary, they

suffer a cultural shock that plunges them into depression, apathy, hypochondria, excessive concern for their health and/or cleanliness, excessive sleep or food, etc. These are “symptoms” of a cultural shock to which we should pay close attention when they continue in time after a transcultural transfer.

I mention these processes that occur in transculturation because they often coincide with the formation of the multicultural community. It is, therefore, very important to bear in mind that in many cases people are not only adapting to the culture of a new place and perhaps also learning a new language—which, in itself, is already highly demanding—but are also, at the same time, interacting with multiple cultures within and maybe also outside of their community. Sometimes, when forming multicultural communities, we do not take into account or adequately accompany the personal processes of transculturation and inculturation that each of the Sisters is going through, on a personal level in parallel with communitarian and pastoral challenges. In fact, truly intercultural processes can only be initiated with people who have already lived through at least 3 years of transculturation.

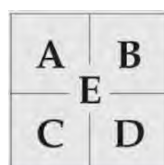
Interculturality: Let us now use the diagram of cultures A, B, C, and D to illustrate the difference between multiculturalism and interculturality.



¹ The diagrams and the general way of presenting them are taken from Anthony J. Gittins, *Living Mission Interculturally: Faith, Culture, and the Renewal of Praxis*, Liturgical Press, 2015, 621–746 [Kindle].

While the first diagram outlined the coexistence of different cultures in clearly demarcated compartments, in this second diagram we see arrows coming out of each group or person in the direction of the other groups or people, thus illustrating the interrelation between them. At the same time, the arrows do not indicate a single direction but rather a round trip. Going to meet the other person and the other’s welcome. Moreover, the dividing lines are not continuous but punctuated, thus indicating that the boundaries between some cultures and others are no longer sharp and clear.

However, this diagram does not yet illustrate the intercultural community. Good relations, communication, and good coexistence—although very important and necessary—are not enough. The intercultural community is called to take a step beyond the tolerance of differences and to live a process of transformation or conversion that challenges it to create, as a result of this interrelation, a new culture.



In this diagram, we will call “E” the new culture that is the fruit of intercultural living. The “E” culture will be made up of a new and unique combination of some elements from each of the participating cultures, making each person feel at the same time “at home” while facing something “new.”

This combination will emerge as an always dynamic result of the process of interaction and of agreements reached between the parties. In this process, each community enriches itself with the values and lights brought by the other culture, but both also take on the challenges and face their respective shadows and blind spots (e.g., victimization, superiority or inferiority complexes, imperialist mentality, racism, historical prejudices, and so on). This model of community interaction between cultures, on a level of symmetry and equality, is diametrically opposed to the assimilationist model that prevailed (and still survives?!!) in groups where minority or presumably underdeveloped, uncivilized, cultures or “pagans” had to adapt, conform, and assume the superior or majority culture while abandoning their own. This assimilationist model is what governed most of our Congregations in the “recruitment” of vocations in the so-called “mission countries.” This assimilationist model is framed in an approach that implies integration as a hegemonic affirmation of the host country’s culture.

According to this model, it is expected that the immigrant or the trained person, in our case, behaves and assumes the culture of the receiving society or community, putting aside or nullifying his/her culture of origin.

On the contrary, instead of seeking the “assimilation” that denies and wants to erase the differences, the model presented by interculturality seeks to know, value, deepen, and integrate these differences. As a result of the interrelation and encounter between cultures, we are invited to create a new “E” culture, in which we can all give the best of ourselves, share our gifts, and let ourselves be challenged by the encounter and the relationship with the “different,” so that our obscurities may be converted in the light of the Gospel. Humanly speaking, interculturality is a counter-cultural movement in which few people would feel comfortable or for which they would have to be prepared. Our cultures “program” us in such a way that we tend to relate to “ours” to defend ourselves from “the others,” “those who are different,” and their potential threats. On the basis of the faith and the power of grace, however, inclusion in equality is the Project of the Kingdom that Jesus preached and, as such, it is the work of the Holy Spirit.

Cultures: The terms just presented, in turn, lead us to briefly deepen our understanding of the term “culture.” This concept of anthropological origin does not have, as such, just one definition; it has been evolving over time and can be analysed from hundreds of different perspectives. However, for our purposes, we are going to take the definition that presents “culture” as a way of life of a group of people—the behaviours, beliefs, values, and symbols that they accept, generally without thinking about them, and that are passed along by communication and imitation from one generation to the next.

Culture, as such, does not exist; but there are people who embody a certain culture or use certain “cultural lenses” that give meaning to their lives and allow them to communicate with each other and to organize themselves. My culture is the best way that “my” people found to survive and develop in the context and place where we live. Therefore, no culture can claim the right to become the universal “norm” of other cultures. Our challenge, in the Church, is that, for centuries, our faith has been confused with the culture that mediated its transmission (both the cultures that mediated the writing of our Sacred Texts and the Western culture that later extended the implantation of the Church).

Let us look at some characteristics of culture: culture is learned and transmitted through

socialization in the primary and secondary groups in which we have grown up (the family, the clan, the neighbourhood, the school, the city or the countryside, social class, religion, profession, and the different groups of identification and belonging in which we have been formed). Culture is stable and dynamic, it changes very slowly, but it is so much a part of ourselves that we do not know it until we “leave” it.

Only in contact with the “other,” with what is “different” do we begin to know our own culture and that of others... this knowledge is, then, given by comparison with the “others,” those who are “outside” our group. This division between “us” (women, Catholics, religious, professionals, Latin Americans, Argentines, southern, northern, etc.) and “them” (those who are not like “us”) protects us and gives us a sense of identity and belonging, but it also isolates us, challenges us, and fills us with fear in the face of the “unknown.”

There are no higher or more developed cultures and less developed or inferior cultures, but different cultures. And each culture believes that it is the best because it is the best form that has allowed its group to adapt to the context in which it developed.

Getting to know a culture is very difficult. To illustrate this difficulty, it is compared to an iceberg of which we can only see the protruding surface, i.e. 10%, while 90% is below water. In the same way, the material elements of each culture (like clothes and typical foods, traditional artifacts, dances, etc.) constitute only the 10% that we can see, feel, hear, smell and name with ease. In the remaining 90%, which corresponds to the immaterial elements, we can distinguish in turn 3 levels: the first, partially visible, level to which we can access when we seek it intentionally (what is behind the language, communication styles, leadership, conflict resolution, etc.); the second level (one of the central values) is much more difficult to reach and examine; and the third level (that of the basic suppositions) is so deep and unconscious that we cannot really get to know it: this is what we take as “normal,” “given.”



From this brief terminological framework, I will strive to make it clear to us that living interculturally is a vocation and a counter-cultural option, and that, as such, it appeals to the faith and to the life of grace. Humanly, we all tend to seek and interact with those with whom we feel identified and, therefore, understood, included, accepted. Conversely, what is “different” tends to scare us, challenge us, and make us distrustful. This distrust, especially for cultures that suffered the experience of the colonization or the invasion of their nations, is not unjustified or minor; on the contrary, it is a collective wound that lasts for generations and must be healed personally before engaging in a project of intercultural life and mission. Intercultural life is not automatically the result of the mere coexistence of people of different cultures; on the contrary, it must be intentionally constructed and assumed as a process of personal and community conversion. Unlike transnational companies that seek to use interculturality as a tool for improving their sales, we are invited to transform it into a way of life that makes us more faithful in following Jesus and building the Kingdom.

Possible activity

Take some time to reflect on your own personal elements about culture:



Cultural Interview Questions...

1. What is your definition of “culture?”
2. How do you define “family?”
3. Who holds the most “status” in your family? Why?
4. How do you define success?
5. Do you consider your parents to be successful?
6. How important is education in your family?
7. Is punctuality important to you? Why or why not?
8. What is the most important meal of the day?
9. Do you eat foods that are indigenous to your culture? Why or why not? If you answered yes, name some of the foods that you eat. If you answered no, what types of foods do you eat?
10. Did you ever live with your grandparents or extended family?
11. Do you actively participate in an organized religion?
12. How important is religion in your family? Why ?
13. If religion is important in your family, do you plan to pass this on to your children? Why or why not?
14. Are the roles of men and women specifically defined in your family? If so, what are they?
15. Do you have any eating habits/rituals that are specific to your culture?
16. Define and describe the most important (or most celebrated) holiday of your culture.
17. If you are from a culture that speaks English as a second language, do you speak your native language? If not, why? If so, will you teach your native language to any children you have?
18. How is physical contact viewed in your culture?

19. What is considered most disrespectful in your culture?
20. What is considered most respectful in your culture?
21. What would you say is, from your perspective, the most commonly held misconception about people of your culture?
22. Have you ever experienced racism? In what form?
23. What can be done about racism and prejudice, in your opinion?
24. Do young people today have a sense of culture?
25. What is the best thing about living here?
26. What is the worst thing about living here?
27. Have you ever felt excluded based on your gender or culture?
28. Do you remember excluding others based on Culture or Gender?

Personal Names

Objective:

To explore the meaning and personal importance of participants' names.

Procedure:

Participants are divided into mixed cultural groups of 5-7 people.

Each group appoints a reporter who will note and later share anything s/he feels other groups should hear. Hand out sheets of paper on which are written the questions in a) below. The facilitator or someone invited by her/him begins

a) **Explain:**

- * What is the meaning of your name?
- * Why you were given that name?
- * How do you feel about your name and how do others react to it?
- * Would you like to say anything to the group about how you would like to be known?
- * What is the place of nick-names in your culture?

b) **Reports from Small Groups**

Reporters give their reports in the plenary group.

Question in the Plenary group: Have you any difficulty with names from other cultures?

- What have you learnt from this sharing?

For Reflection

Interculturality is a dynamic process that invites people of the community not only to live side by side, but also to cooperate and co-create an intercultural society together (Vižintin 2016).

2 Interculturality and Community Life

Video

<https://vimeo.com/339485701>

Scripture Passage

Zaccheus Lk 19:1-10

Reading

Culture An Essential Element Impacting Congregational Transformation

Mark Clarke – Community Works

“Today and millennia ago, belongingness consists of a combination of a sense of identity (how we distinguish ourselves from others) a sense of security (the opposite of powerlessness) and a sense of order (structure and predictability).”

Communities and organizations spend significant time exploring their vision and the necessary action steps to achieve that dream. Yet, there is limited time spent on discerning the changes needed to the collective culture. There is a hidden assumption that the culture does not need to adjust. The group lives under the guise that it can maintain its current cultural behavior, beliefs and values without questioning how some aspects could be detrimental to achieving the dream.

Society is currently in a dramatic cultural shift. This intense evolution of today’s society is simultaneously happening at all levels. Whether it be individual, civic, or institutional, new questions, beliefs and behavioral norms are reframing and reshaping relationships. What is distinctive about this voyage is individually and institutionally proceeding on local, regional and global levels. We experience this reality up front and personal as we discuss guns, immigration, climate change, gender, etc. These exchanges are an emotional drama of hope and anticipation as well as anger, rage and name-calling. Society is in the middle of an emerging paradigm. We are not able to return to the past, yet we live in the present with a combination of hopefulness and fear as this new culture unfolds.

The simple chart outlines some of the realities at play while redefining culture, and what it means to be in relationship.

Area	Current Culture	Emerging Cultural Shift
Relationships	Face to face	Social Media Networks
Ethnic shifts	Homogenous	Intercultural
Religious Exposure	One Dominant Religion	Multiple Traditions
Work	Silos	Networks and Collaborations

There are significant ethnic cultural shifts. In her book, *Political Tribes*, Amy Chua points out, “between 1965 and 2015, the Asian population in America grew exponentially from 1.3 million to 18 million, as did the Hispanic population from 8 million to almost 57 million. As a result, the complexion of America is ‘browning’”.²

The emerging adaptation from cultural and technological perspectives places increasing pressure on accepted cultural norms - both personally and institutionally.

We have entered a historical cultural change and are fumbling to understand the outcome with clarity.

This development places society into a profound, spiritual path of radical detachment, discernment, and walking in the mystery of the unknown. Religious communities are called upon to resurrect their culture in a historical framework that will risk forgoing the known and fumbling in the desert. This will mean letting go of the security of the familiar. It will demand balancing their experience of growing as life evolves, while simultaneously experiencing how to transform the congregation’s current culture.

For religious communities, many of the current frameworks and models are based upon silos or individual charism.

This cultural, paradigmatic passage calls religious communities and their ministries to balance being rooted in the richness of their culture while simultaneously renewing its essence for these times.

Thus, one of the fundamental elements of discernment is exploring the collective culture.

The cultural journey is transversed by exploring three intersecting perspectives: identity, the link between mission and strategy, and the collective soul work. All three perspectives are necessary for the change process.



Identity

“No one is born with culture, but everyone acquires culture. There are no mature human beings without culture. Culture is what human groups do to their environment, for good or ill. It is the form of social life, a meaning making system, and a way of human contextually.”³

In his book, Organizational Culture and Leadership, Edgar Schein talks about the essence of culture. He states, *“Though the essence of a group’s culture is its pattern of shared, basic taken-for-granted assumptions, the culture will manifest itself at the levels of observable artifacts and shared espoused values, norms and rules of behavior.”⁴* This is especially true of religious communities whose identity is steeped in myth and story, and a rich sense of identity called charism that has been molded and reshaped throughout evolving historical times. This enculturation begins with the individual’s initial formation and continues to be manifested through a mission-centered approach to community and ministerial life.

Culture is both present and futuristic. Each generation is grounded in a set of shared assumptions, values and shared beliefs. For each age group, there are flash points that bring them to question the accepted cultural realities. An example of this is the reaction of the students to the shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida in February of 2018. This tragic event moved these students to question our culture’s fundamental assumptions about guns. The heartbreaking loss of friends, security and innocence, brought about by a person with a serious mental illness easily purchasing a gun, catapulted these students to seek a solution to this tragic event and others like it. Their passion for holding society accountable compelled them to use social media networks to establish a national dialogue and a new movement. This behavior is not unique to Parkland school. Every organization faces triggering events that will challenge their core assumptions, values and symbols. The unfortunate reality is that when beliefs and values are so ingrained, a shocking set of events can shake a group’s fundamental essence.

The Parkland school experience was instantaneously redefined by the students' ability to utilize technology, which is second nature to this generation. The students interact and communicate through social media on a daily basis allowing them to leverage and maximize the impact of their efforts for change. These technological templates allowed them to create a national protest in weeks rather than months. They amplified these instruments to foster ongoing communication, create a system, and build an effective, unified network for reimagining the gun issue. Their ability to instantly access information, networks, and communicate with one another transformed a traditional conversation about guns to a call for action with consequences. The students quickly and effectively took an event that historically would have been local, transforming it into a national and international conversation and movement.

Religious communities are not immune from this paradigmatic shift. The changes go beyond aging, fewer members and vocations. Religious are participating in a world that is fundamentally challenging the meaning of how we relate, work together and build community. In addition, the concept of being spiritual and not religious is fundamentally rewriting the rules of church participation.

Society is experiencing the same shift in the new, emerging spirituality movements. They are changing the cultural language from "*I am spiritual*" to "*I'm not religious.*" They are utilizing tradition and new technology to open doors to increase participation and feel connected to a community. For example, Sounds True, an organization that focuses on spiritual growth is offering a yearlong mindfulness meditation seminar through the use of webinars, journaling and Facebook that has thousands of participants. In a similar manner, Deepak Chopra and Oprah Winfrey are hosting a 21-day meditation on the topic of *Shedding the Weight - Mind, Body and Spirit* with 171,839 comments after only 11 days. Both of these programs are redefining how people engage with spirituality. In faith-based communities, we see people and organizations like Richard Rohr and *Dynamic Catholic* utilizing the same tools to reach tens of thousands.

Another reality is the number of people exposed to different cultures and worldviews. This is transpiring because of extensive travel, media exposure, service projects and diverse living situations. These experiences reframe mental models from local to a more regional and global sense of connection. This trend is especially true for people in Generation X and Millennial generations.

Given these trends, an important question for religious communities is how will they adapt to this emerging paradigm? Newer members and other interested people will come with a different set of assumptions, beliefs and experiences that have been shaped by this emerging reality. They will not understand the 60's, Vatican II or the Cold War. Their lives have been shaped as technological natives with more travel and multi-cultural experiences. These newer members bring a freshness and personal experience to the conversation that previous generations have not had.

Today, religious communities are asked to entertain and create a direction based on this new reality. The question is how do we remain rooted in our charism yet adapt to the new mediums of connectivity, understanding of spirituality, and pressing societal issues? This question, if answered honestly will challenge the existing models and demand moving beyond the community's cultural comfort zone into new and challenging waters.

Culture: the thread that unites mission and strategy

The second critical element is recognizing the profound connection between culture, mission and strategy. Organizations continually plan and choose what they believe is an innovative and transforming direction. Yet, far too often they fail to recognize the power of the culture to impede

achieving their dream destination. The vision is greeted with enthusiasm yet the behaviors, customs and affirmation have not adapted to fit the new aspiration. For organizations, especially religious communities, there is a need to explore how to reframe the interior culture to accommodate their shared direction.



This graphic shows the importance of threading together these critical aspects of collective discernment in order to allow a religious community to effectively share their charism and shape the future. In any discernment process, the cultural trends need to be front and center. This is especially critical in a historical period that is going through its own fine-tuning process. An important question for reflection is how are the vacillating cultural trends impacting the future of the congregation? This is particularly important since new members will be called to live religious life in the emerging new paradigm. The assumptions, beliefs and norms of previous generations will need to be reimagined as religious communities continue the trend of becoming smaller.

An essential element for discovery is how to nurture existing social networks while creating new ones. This is critical, as Martin Dempsey shared in his book, *Radical Inclusion*, “Simply by participating in a social media network, an individual has the ability to start a movement, become a leader, and gain a following.”⁵ This reality can be said for any organization. In the process of discernment, it is vital to recognize that traditional models are being integrated into and superseded by collaborative and social networks. Thus, religious communities must discover how this will impact their individual and collective understanding of culture. For new members, the social network environment is a natural fit for their life.

Simultaneously, cultural shifts create a profound tension in any discernment or planning process. This is especially true when different generations have various interpretations and experiences of the cultural trends.

The tension can be palatable and be lived creatively or avoided and locked in the current cultural framework. An important capacity is developing the ability to have honest, open and compassionate dialogue with others who hold different experiences and beliefs. When a group engages in this type of interchange, it is both affirming and thought-provoking to one’s culture. This style of enriching conversation opens the door to explore where the current culture is being called to transform.

At this moment religious communities are invited to discern from a different perspective. What are the cultural realities we need to embrace while remaining faithful to our charism that continues to foster a community on mission?

Collective Soul

A religious community's culture is the heartbeat of the organization. It pulsates and offers a sense of identity and purpose. At the same time, it forms the style of relationships between one another and with the outside world. From formation to the jubilees, and to vow celebrations, these rituals bond and shape the community's identity. So many of the richest stories of the community are around these powerful moments of celebrating together. These experiences create a soul bonding and identity for the religious community. In his book, Make Me One with Everything, Lama Surya Das shares, "When I hear my Christian friends talk about the communion of the Holy Spirit, I remember that the Greek word for communion, 'koinonia', may just as easily be rendered as "transformation" or "communication" or "companionship".⁶ These words speak to the cultural collective soul. When lived decade after decade and adapted over time, it creates a sense of communion within and beyond the congregation. This is why in any discernment process the reflection on the culture is really a dialogue with the collective soul.

The collective soul is about creating "defining moments". Chip and Dan Heath reflect in their book, The Power of Defining Moments,⁷ on four important elements:

Elevation: Defining moments rise above the everyday

- Insight: Rewire our understanding of ourselves and the world
- Pride: Capture us at our best – moments of achievement, moments of courage
- Connection: Defining moments are social

These moments become part of the cultural myth that is passed down from generation to generation. It is a way of fostering a sense of identity, security and order. One's culture becomes a sense of communion around a shared direction that enlivens both the community and its sense of mission.

This is why any transformative discernment process needs to take into consideration the culture. Culture is the powerful link between interconnected relationships and a shared common good.

Final Thoughts

In summary, it is vital to respect a culture's historical perspective. Reinhold Niebuhr once said, "Nothing that is worth doing can be achieved in our lifetime; therefore, we must be saved by hope. Nothing, which is true or beautiful or good, makes complete sense in any immediate context of history. This is why transforming one culture is a constant process."⁸

A religious community's culture is passed down from generation to generation as a sacred trust. This powerful connection to one's lineage is passed from one historical peer group to another. They are invited to affirm and reshape the culture, then reverently pass the torch to future members. It is a spiritual journey of embracing one's historical moment, then to become radically detached in order for the next generation of religious members to embody the charisma and collective soul journey in their time - in their own unique way.

1. Ori Brafman and Martin Dempsey, *Radical Inclusion: What the Post-9/11 World Should Have Taught Us About Leadership*, (Missionday, 2018), Print. 68
2. Chau, Amy, *Political Tribes: Group Instinct and the Fate of Nations*, (Penguin 2018), Print. 166-67
3. ????
4. ????
5. Brafman and Dempsey 73
6. Lama Surya Das, *Make Me One with Everything - Buddhist Meditations to Awaken from the Illus*,

- (Sounds True Inc 2015), Print. 5
7. Chip Heath and Dan Heath, *The Power of Moments: Why Certain Experiences Have Extraordinary Impact*, (Simon and Schuster 2017), Print. 12-14
 8. Robert Reich, *The Common Good*, (Alfred A. Knopf 2018) Print. 184

Downloaded from: <https://www.cworksindy.com/culture-an-essential-element-impact>

Possible activity

Family Meal Exercise

This exercise also helps us look at material and performance aspects of cultures and then analyze them to discover the values and assumptions that lie under the surface. Sharing in multicultural groups allows for learning about different cultures represented and may help the dominant culture, especially, to become more aware of alternative values and practices to be included.

Requirements: Blank sheets of paper and colored pencils for each person in the group.

a. Memory (5 minutes)

Picture yourself eating an ordinary family meal at the age of 10 or 12 years old.

Draw a circle on a sheet of paper showing where each person, including yourself, sat during the meal.

b. Exploration in small groups (25 minutes)

Share with the members of your group who the circles represent. What were the different family members doing or saying?

How did you feel? What did you do?

How was the food divided up and served?

Who prepared and cleaned up after the meals?

How did the spatial positioning, food distribution, chores around meals affect your perception of :

- (i) Authority and power
- (ii) Gender roles
- (iii) Community
- (iv) Hospitality

c. Reflection either in small groups or in plenary (15 minutes)

(i) What did you learn from exploring your childhood family meal?

(ii) What values, beliefs, attitudes and assumptions did these meals instill in you?

(iii) What struck you from the sharing of others about their family meals?

(iv) In what ways should the Columban family embody values important to all the members of the members of this group?

For Reflection

Are you building a real and authentic relationships with those who are considered 'other'? How are you enabling their identity, voices and stories to shape your community?

3 Interculturality and Leadership

Video

<https://vimeo.com/347462846>

Scripture Passage

Woman at the Well Jn 4:1-42

Reading

Imagining Leadership in A Global Community

Pat Murray, IBVM

Thank you for this invitation to be among you these days and to share some reflections on “imagining leadership in a global community.” I’m Irish as you can probably hear but I have been living outside of Ireland for over 20 years. As a practical theologian, when I reflect on leadership in today’s global community in the light of God’s word, I move into the world of the imagination. There memories and stories, symbols, and images, nourish my reflections. An Irish writer once described imagination “as something in her head that was singing.” Jesus awakened the imagination of people through stories, images and symbols, challenging his listeners to interpret them, to find the way that would lead to fullness of life. Someone has well said that “stories are data with soul.”¹ Therefore as leaders it is important to encourage storytelling, to explore anew our charisms, to retell our congregational stories, to re-examine our symbols, histories and traditions reinterpreting them in the light of today’s global life and mission. Today I will offer you some images and thoughts for your reflection as leaders but I will first look briefly on our world and religious life today.

Our Globalized World

We are living in extraordinary times. This is not just “an era of change but a change of eras.”² We see new technologies, passing information quickly around the world creating “economic, political, and strategic dynamics, never previously conceived or suspected.”³ We live in a globalized interconnected world where millions of people are on the move within and across continents, fleeing poverty, war and famine, seeking new opportunities in distant places, struggling to build new lives in unfamiliar cultures and contexts. Our world is marked by pluralism, growing differentiation and complexity. While we feel closer to each other and better understand one another and our differences, there is a parallel rise in xenophobic and racist attitudes that are often exploited for political gain. We have seen many incredibly sad events when people act out of these beliefs. There is the daily struggle for the basics of life all around us. I have seen homeless people foraging for food in cities and women walking for 4 hours to the nearest well for water. A recent article in the New York Times spoke of the scandal of an ice cream sundae costing \$1,000 and a hamburger \$295 while 25% of the world’s children have stunted development because of malnutrition. This is the world of detention and holding centres along borderlands. We have seen rape used as a weapon of war and child soldiers conscripted by militias. We witness destruction of life and livelihood in local wars and conflicts. Millions of people are trafficked worldwide; others live fragile lives in refugees’ camps where women foraging for firewood are fearful of being robbed or raped. Life on our planet is threatened with extinction through myriad forms of contamination, pollution and destruction while human life is being devalued from birth to death.⁴ This global scenario tests the very meaning and purpose of our consecrated life and the commitments we make at General Chapters. It tests the honesty of our solidarity with the poor and with the planet, the excluded and those whose right to life is

threatened.⁵ It challenges each of us to confront our lifestyles with the demands of the Gospel. It invites us to examine how our living, our mission and ministry should respond today.

Who are we as women religious in today's world?

The face of Consecrated Life has changed dramatically. It has become culturally diverse in its members and in the charisms that the spirit gives.⁶ I am privileged to have an overview because of the 2,000 congregational leaders who are members of UISG. We sisters number over 500,000. They say that not even the Holy Spirit knows how many we are! We belong to different charismatic families, have different spiritual roots and traditions. In these past years however we are discovering that beneath the diversity, we share what might be called "the charism" of vowed religious life, rooted in our passion for Christ and our passion for humanity. Pope Francis has expressed his hope "for a growth in communion between the members of different Institutes," calling us "to step out more courageously from the confines of our respective Institutes and to work together, at the local and global levels." This he says "would make for a more effective prophetic witness."⁷ He invites us to be "part of a true communion which is constantly open to encounter, dialogue, attentive listening and mutual assistance"⁸ reaching out globally to people of other faiths and of no faith. Using new means of communication, religious life has become a transnational network with a global identity. We are pilgrims in a globalised world seeking new ways to express our life and our mission. The Irish poem TRASNA⁹ meaning CROSSING expresses some aspects of the leadership journey that we are undertaking.

TRASNA

The pilgrims paused on the ancient stones
In the mountain gap.

Behind them stretched the roadway they had travelled .
Ahead, mist hid the track.

Unspoken the question hovered:
Why go on? Is life not short enough?

Why seek to pierce its mystery?
Why venture further on strange paths, risking all'

Surely that is a gamble for fools - or lovers.
Why not return quietly to the known road?

Why be a pilgrim still?
A voice they knew called to them, saying:

This is Trasna, the crossing place.
Choose! Go back if you must,

You will find your way easily by yesterday's fires,
there may be life in the embers yet.

If that is not your deep desire,
Stand still. Lay down your load.

Take your life firmly in your two hands,
(Gently... you are trusted with something precious)

While you search your heart's yearnings:
What am I seeking? What is my quest?

When your star rises deep within,
Trust yourself to its leading.

You will have the light for first steps.
This is Trasná, the crossing place.

Choose!
This is Trasná, the crossing place Come !

by Raphael Considine PBVM

How then to imagine leadership at this crossing place, as members of a global community? I would like to offer some images and reflections to spark your imagination because we know that we do not just see images "but we see through images."¹⁰ How then might these images speak to you today as leaders?

1. Widen the tent of our hearts
2. Be present at the borderlands
3. Embrace vulnerability
4. Celebrate our luxurious cultural diversity
5. Engage in web-watching and web-weaving
6. Listen to the long notes

1. Widen the tent of our hearts:

The prophet Isaiah said: "Enlarge the place of your tent, stretch your tent curtains wide, do not hold back; lengthen your cords, strengthen your stakes."¹¹ This is a helpful image for religious life today because it speaks of both flexibility and rootedness, unbounded hospitality and secure identity. We are invited not to hold back, to stretch wide but at the same time to "strengthen our stakes," by ensuring that what holds the tent in place goes down deep. This verse invites us to make space in our hearts, for Christ and for those who live on the margins of life. In this time of rapid change and challenge, we need to ask ourselves again: Are we really grounded. "Is Jesus really our first and only love; as we promised that he would be when we professed our vows."¹² Have we embraced the vision and values that inspired our founders and foundresses? The Gospel was central to their vowed life "a concrete expression of (their) passionate love."¹³ Our charisms, are the fruits of their response to the call of Christ. Our founders translated the Gospel into a particular way of life¹⁴ which responded to the needs of their times. How are we being challenged by the Gospel? How is our charism being stretched and enlarged today? Does it expand our minds and hearts into radical and

sincere living? Do we have the passion of our founders? Are we also close to the people, sharing their joys and sorrows, seeking to understand their needs?

The responses needed today are often not found in the big initiatives of the past but instead are like tiny mustard seeds - a word of hope, a listening heart, a compassionate presence, a healing glance. This mysticism of encounter happens everywhere – it is “far reaching, personal and outgoing.”¹⁵ We have seen this mysticism in action in our communities at sick beds, on city streets with homeless people, on the borders with separated families, in refugee camps, in hospitals and parishes with people who are struggling– in fact wherever we are. While the needs of the world are complex and extensive, do we believe that it is the small, the hidden, the unknown acts of kindness and love that will transform our world. It is the quality of our presence individually and in our community living, that matters above all, so that people can see the presence of God in us. Pope Francis speaks often about a revolution of tenderness reminding us that “God’s tenderness brings us to the understanding that “love is the meaning of life.”¹⁶ We are called to pour the love we receive from the Lord back into the world – into our communities, the Church and wider society. Through this revolution of tenderness and love, the pope is proposing a humble way to move continents and mountains.¹⁷ This is the Christian revolution that we are called to lead. It is a revolution in the true sense of the word - the return to the origin of the Gospel as a way forward, a revolution of mercy.¹⁸

But in order to be capable of mercy we must quiet ourselves to listen to God’s word and to contemplate his mercy. Then we need to reach out with this *mercying* love first to ourselves as leaders – for we are often hard on ourselves - and then to become mercy to our brothers and sisters.

The image of the tent reminds us of the story of Abraham and Sarah and their hospitality to the three strangers at Mamre¹⁹ which we reflected on recently. Abraham was sitting at the entrance to his tent. Jewish sources recount that the tent was probably open on four sides, therefore Abraham could see anyone approaching. He was probably not feeling his best self; it was the hottest part of the day and to complicate matters God was standing right in front of him and then there were these three strangers arriving.²⁰As leaders, doesn’t it sound familiar - everything happening at the same time! We are told that when Abraham looked up, he saw the strangers and rushed out to greet them. He brought water to bathe their feet and invited them to refresh themselves while he went to get them something to eat. He offered them food in abundance and then stood near them under the tree while they enjoyed the food. When the strangers asked Abraham where his wife Sarah was, he replied that she was in the tent. One of them said that he would return in a year’s time and that by that time Sarah would have a son. Sarah who was by now at the entrance to the tent, just laughed, she thought to herself that this was simply impossible since she was well beyond child-bearing age and Abraham too was old. When asked why she had laughed, she became afraid and denied that she had done so.

Yet we know the happy ending to this encounter at the tent in the desert – Sarah and Abraham received the gift of new life. The visitors, sent by God profoundly changed their life, creating a future of which they could never have dreamed. We notice that with the arrival of the strangers, Abraham appears to have ignored God, yet he did exactly what God would have wanted, because of his deep relationship with the living God. This is part of Abraham and Sarah’s journey in faith. It can perhaps help us to reflect on the meaning of our life as religious today.

We can ask ourselves as leaders of our communities: Is God standing before us? Because if he is not, there is a danger that the love which animates us could grow cold.....and the “salt of faith” could lose its savour. To keep our gaze fixed on Jesus Christ “the pioneer and perfecter of our faith” ²¹is our challenge. Today we meet people arriving through the four sides of our congregational tents - people of all ages who want a listening ear, migrants and refugees, those who have lost their jobs,

been trafficked, the depressed, the downhearted, those who are “searching for the ultimate meaning and definitive truth of their lives and of the world.”²² Some are strangers, others known to us; still others are not physically present but we hear about them, read about them and their struggles in others parts of the world. When they pass by or come to ask for sustenance or just for a moment touch our lives from afar, “what do we have to offer them?” “what is the nourishment that we can give?” “what is the unbounded generosity and (tender)love that is an essential part of our.....community witness.”²³ We must provide the practical things needed at that moment but we are called to give more – a radical prophetic witness, of having a global heart; “of being a pilgrim and prayer presence” ever watchful, “making intercession, firm in faith,” with God and with the world on their behalf.²⁴

What then is the new life that is to be born in us, the transformation that is happening, unknown to us, in and through these multiple encounters? Have we like Sarah sometimes lapsed into a certain cynicism, thinking that giving birth to something new is impossible? Or like Abraham will we stay near the strangers who come, listening to their questions, engaging in conversation, feeling called to new responses. During these past years I have had extraordinary conversations with young entrepreneurs, graphic artists, young people, families and others who are all seeking creative ways to live their faith. Religious life, like the Church itself, is living through difficult times, “the heat of the day.” Far from becoming irrelevant it would seem that consecrated life is perhaps “assuming a new and unexpected role” by showing how to accept and live “the difficulties of the present day with faith and even with joy.”²⁵ In addition we are being invited to join our small efforts for change with other parts of the world. This coming October during the Synod on Amazonia, REPAM (the Ecclesial Network of Pan-Amazonia), is constructing a Tent in Rome to represent the Amazon: Our Common Home. This will be a space of welcome near the Vatican for all who come to attend the Synod but especially to welcome members of indigenous communities; a place to get to know one another, pray together, exchange experiences. At UISG we will try to create this space digitally to help worldwide participation and invite all to “widen the tent of our hearts.”

2. Be present at the borderlands

Pope Francis talks about an outgoing Church, a Church “in uscita,” which needs to move out onto wounded landscapes, to the borderlands. Gloria Anzaldua used the metaphor “borderlands” or “la frontera” to refer to different types of crossings – between geopolitical boundaries, between places of social dislocations and the crossings which must be made to exist in multiple linguistic and cultural contexts.²⁶ Borderlands are everywhere: in our local neighbourhoods, at national and international levels and very close to home within our religious communities. For Anzaldua borderlands are important places not only for the hybridity that occurs there but also for the perspective that they can offer to those who live there. Living in borderlands produces a certain knowledge, that of being within a system while also retaining the knowledge of an outsider. We have to cultivate this “borderlands” heart and mind. Seeing through “the eyes of others” is essential to gain a deeper understanding, an empathy and compassion, than is deeper that what can be achieved by staying within one’s own social milieu.

“Borderlands” is a rich metaphor. It represents the multitude of places and opportunities where people from different cultures and contexts cross over to one another in order to learn and grow together. This happens through the building of relationships that gift one another and lead to mutual transformation. This is not merely about surviving side by side but it is a process of building deep connections, celebrating and appreciating difference, committing to collaborate together. When Cardinal Montenegro invited the UISG to send sisters to Sicily as thousands of migrants were arriving on its shores, in outlining his expectations, he was very clear about what he wanted. He said: “I don’t want another project, there are many good projects already. I want sisters who will walk the streets, get close to the people, be present among both the local people and the migrants, sisters who will be

able to build a bridge of understanding enabling each group to cross over to the other.” Being truly present to one to another, being open to a mutual encounter with the Other who comes as stranger, is a prophetic act in today’s divisive contexts. Today the local people call the sisters in the UISG communities “Le Suore del Mondo” – the Sisters of the World – perhaps that is our new calling?

Today more than ever our presence is vital at the many borders and frontiers that block and separate people. They can be political or physical borders or invisible borders that control the inclusion/exclusion of peoples. The Spanish theologian Mercedes Navarro reminds us that the Christian God is “a frontier God” and that “*to survive at the frontiers one must live without frontiers and be a crossroads.*”²⁷ So in our contemplation, in our prayers, in our outreach, we need to constantly inhabit frontiers and borderlands; we need to live prophetically in the in-between space where we can carry people across the divide of culture, religious, gender, race and ethnicity. We need to be people who stand at crossroads physically and spiritually, watching and waiting. The concern of our hearts, the power of our prayers and our advocacy can support those sisters who are at physical frontiers in different parts of the world, because in our global sisterhood where one of us is present, all of us are. Can we ask ourselves: “What does it mean to live without frontiers and be a crossroads today? How can we be present physically and spiritually in today’s borderlands?”

3. Embrace vulnerability:

A glance worldwide at developments within religious congregations’ points to a life cycle moving through the stages of birth, maturity, loss and diminishment, leading in some cases to conclusion. We are living the cycle of passion, death and resurrection at personal and organizational levels. The majority of congregations worldwide have fewer than 200 members. Many congregations in the Global South, struggle to provide for their members and their ministries, yet believe radically that God’s presence will provide and sustain them.

Congregations in the Global North are entrusting their institutions into the hands of lay leaders in trusts, foundations and other entities, with the demanding administrative challenges which these processes involve. It is as if we are all arriving together in the same sacred space, where we are experiencing a greater fragility and vulnerability. In a profound way, this makes us more relevant than ever; it places us in communion with the people of our time and place especially those at the peripheries. While we can be justly proud of past achievements, we also have to acknowledge our past blindness and negligence especially where we failed to protect the most vulnerable among us. This calls us to a deep humility that creates space for conversion and change. We are called to face the future with the same courage and conviction of our founders and foundresses, convinced what matters is our presence among and our encounters with the people of today and their needs. Pope Francis reminds us that “we are heirs to those who have gone before us and had the courage to dream.”²⁸ These dreams were often born in times of great social need with scarce resources. We have only to read our archives to connect with their founding experiences of vulnerability and fragility.

The Scriptures describe desert or mountain wildernesses, where God’s people discover liminal places. They seem to be continually forced into the desert – to take the harder, more onerous and hazardous route – as an exacting exercise in radical faith.”²⁹ It is here in the desert, that people are fed, five thousand at a time and a new community takes shape. We are constantly reminded that “the place of scarcity, even death, is revealed by Jesus, as a place of hope and new life.”³⁰ Richard Rohr describes “liminal space” as “the crucial in-between time when everything actually happens and yet nothing appears to be happening.”³¹ It is the waiting time. Today we religious seem to be in this waiting time where we are being called to be patient, to allow time and space for the new to break through. In this liminal place we can share our insights with one another and listen deeply as

we share how we feel that God is calling us; these conversations can reveal the whispers of the Spirit.

The spiritual writer Belden Lane, reflecting on the death of his mother writes that the “starting point for many things is grief, at the very place where endings seem so absolute.”³² While many of us as religious are living in the place of endings.....faith reminds us that that “the pain of closing” is often “the antecedent to every new opening in our lives.”³³ We know that our experience of weakness, confusion and searching, places us among the men and women of our day. What we have to offer to people today is above all our experience of vulnerability, fragility and weakness and our profound belief that God’s grace seldom comes in the way that we might expect? It often demands “the abandonment of every security” and it is only in accepting the vulnerability that grace demands that we find ourselves invited to wholeness.”³⁴ It is through our own limitation and weaknesses as human beings that we are called to live as Christ lived.

The profession of the evangelical counsel of Poverty, Chastity and Obedience is “a radical witness to the power of the Paschal Mystery” as we surrender everything to the one who offers eternal life. Can we lead conversations about fragility and vulnerability? Do we believe that God is preparing the way for something new in our own lives? In the life of the world?

4. Celebrate our luxurious cultural diversity

The recent document *New Wine and New Wineskins* notes that many religious congregations have passed from almost entirely monocultural contexts to the challenge of multiculturalism. Donald S. McGavran speaks about “luxurious human diversity” and Sr. Marie Chin RSM has referred to “the labyrinth of cultures in religious life.”³⁵ How then to exercise leadership amid this growing diversity both globally and locally? We need to ask ourselves a bigger question “How can we as religious congregations, as institutions with a purpose, a charism, bring a positive contribution to the challenge of global intercultural living? How can we as leaders serve this larger purpose?” The question certainly has its relevance in a world impacted by globalization. Now is perhaps the time for religious congregations to demonstrate a new way of relating with the “other” in our communities, that embodies a hopeful perspective for future life in the world. We know that the only way forward for humanity is to transform the planet into a more open and inclusive place, based on the values of solidarity, justice and dialogue. The Spanish theologian José Cristo Rey García Paredes writes that: *Our identity is planetary and global. We are citizens of the world... How are we to transform (this) vision into some deep and fundamental convictions, assumed by each and every one of the members who share the mission?*

Our communities and congregations are nodal points of a much larger canvas of cultural, historical, and economical dynamics. What happens in one part of the world, or in one congregation or in one part of the congregation, reflects the whole and speaks on behalf of the whole. With that global perspective we begin to realise that the “luxurious diversity” within religious life and our connectivity across the world can make a significant impact. The networks and inter-congregational projects that are emerging today speak prophetically of the oneness of humankind. Many times, in South Sudan the local people - though very grateful for the many ways in which their needs were being met – repeatedly ask the religious living among them “how do you from so many different tribes live together?” This is why it is important to work together and with others in order to learn how to live interculturally, to confronting prejudice and racism and our ethnocentric attitudes and behaviours. We have begun this journey within some of our congregations but it is one that we must continue and deepen. Perhaps we could partner or twin with a congregation in another part of the world in order to embrace this challenge? Can we ask ourselves where are we on this inter-cultural journey within our congregations, within society?

5. Engage in web-watching and web-weaving

The Mennonite theologian and peace activist John Paul Lederach has much to teach us about processes of leadership in today's world. He uses the term "moral imagination" to describe something "which calls people beyond things that are immediately apparent and visible."³⁶ He describes moral imagination as "the capacity to give birth to something new."³⁷ A person with moral imagination seeks to uncover possibilities not yet dreamed of. Reflecting on his work as a peace-maker, Lederach realized that the use of a "web approach" enabled the process of change in many difficult contexts. The lines, connections and knots which we see in a web provide insight into what Lederach calls "a relationship-centric approach."³⁸ The art of web-weaving means that we should look at relationships through "the lenses of social crossroads, connections and interdependence."³⁹ Webs of relationships create the social energy necessary to provide new purpose and direction. Leaders Lederach says, need to learn the skills necessary for web-watching and web-weaving. They need to be able to identify social crossroads where connecting links can be established with others in order to strengthen society's sense of interdependence. At LCWR you have certainly been doing this.

Lederach presents a number of important concepts which can help us be part of leadership at a global level. He speaks about weaving webs, noticing turning points, being yeast and establishing platforms. These concepts have a Scriptural resonance. **Turning points** are those moments of conversion that turn people in another direction. They are moments, pregnant with new life which often arise from barren ground. Here "new things come into existence, old things are reshaped and our ways of seeing, hearing, feeling, thinking and so forth are transformed."⁴⁰ For Lederach, yeast, is usually a small group of people who are in the right place at the right time. They create a pull in an organization or in a society. They are willing to risk; to step out and venture into unknown territory "without any guarantee of success or even safety."⁴¹ Lederach sees risk as a vocation that involves a mysterious journey that allows imagination to rise up and "carry people towards a new, though mysterious and often unexpected shore."⁴² It means being able to embrace vulnerability and fear. Finally, for Lederach, platforms are relational places which keep groups of people in creative interaction.

In many emerging global religious life initiatives, we can see these elements at work. I'm thinking in particular of the Solidarity with South Sudan project which emerged at the end of decades of civil war because a small group of people wove a web of local, international, inter-agency and inter-faith relationships. Many of your congregations are part of this initiative and indeed played a very significant role in enabling this project. A second example, are the training programmes currently being offered to sisters, priests and brothers who accompany the victims of sexual violence in conflict situations in Central Africa. These programmes link religious with governmental personnel, local and international NGOs and trauma and healing experts. The religious who have been trained are now a source of hope and healing for many in their countries. In addition, they have formed other networks and so are creating new webs of support within their countries. Another example are the 42 anti-trafficking networks led by women religious worldwide including the new network that was established by Talitha Kum in June involving an inter-faith group of women in Lebanon and Syria which includes Catholic sisters and women from 5 other faith traditions. And finally the "Laudato Si" UISG initiative is inviting religious congregations worldwide to join the Catholic Global Climate Movement and make "Laudato Si" known and lived at local levels.

I believe that now is the time for us as religious individually and as congregations to join webs and platforms including those created by others. We can focus on issues which resonate with our respective charisms and bring a faith perspective to these relationships. Together we speak about our concerns to Church leaders and leaders at national and global levels. We make the voice and perspective of women religious heard. Perhaps this is a contemporary way of expressing the parable

of the Vine and the Branches. We can be part of “yeast” groups that aim to make a change. Think of the young Swedish student Greta Thunberg who called on students worldwide “to strike for climate” or Malala Yousafzai who campaigns for girls’ education worldwide. We can engage in web weaving when we connect with others near and far – through webs of prayer and action. **Can we encourage our members to seek out these generative possibilities? What networks does your congregation belong to or has helped to create? As web-watchers what initiatives should we join or strengthen as congregations? As LCWR?** Finally, we need to.....

6. Listen for the Long Note

In conclusion as leaders we have to listen to the long note. A few summers ago, I participated in a seminar on Creative Leadership in the Burren School of Art in the West of Ireland. The Burren itself is an extraordinary geographical landscape. One of the important karst/limestone regions in the world, there is a certain mystical quality about the place. We were a very varied group of people from different walks of life and from all over the world. We had many good conversations about leadership. At the end of each session, a poet, or a musician or an artist responded capturing the essence of each conversation with a poem, a symbol or a musical response because the leader is truly an artist. At the end of one session Martin Hayes, a traditional Irish fiddle player played a piece which ended with a long-extended note. I realized that as leaders, we have to learn to hear and identify these long notes which play out in daily life and which point us to what is happening at a deeper level, calling us to discern how to respond.

St. Ignatius of Loyola asks us to imagine the Trinity looking down on the world and to place ourselves there contemplating the complicated messiness of unredeemed humankind. We can almost hear the Trinity saying “let us work at the transformation of the whole human race; let us respond to the groaning of all creation.”⁴³ The meditation invites us “to descend into the reality of the world and become involved in it, in order to transform it.”⁴⁴ Asking ourselves “How can we be part of the divine plan for the *Missio Dei*, for the redemption of the world? Who are we called to be as women religious, as congregations and as individuals?” Going deeper touches the mystical- prophetic depths of our lives from which all our action flows. The answers lie in being open to engaging in simple acts of encounter and communion with those who are near and those who are far away. We can do this in any place, at any time and at any age. Encountering the other and being in communion with others is at the heart of our leadership as we call ourselves first, then members of our congregations and others to: Widen the tent of our hearts; Be present at the borderlands; Embrace vulnerability; Celebrate our luxurious cultural diversity; Engage in web-watching and web- weaving and finally Listen to the long notes.

Encounter calls for a profound openness to God’s mission in the world. Our faith is “firstly an encounter with Jesus, and then we must do what Jesus does: encounter others.”⁴⁵ Living the *mysticism of encounter* calls for “the ability to hear, to listen to other people; the ability to seek ways and means”⁴⁶ of building the Reign of God together. Across the world we sisters as a community of missionary disciples seek to move forward, boldly taking the initiative, going out to others, searching for those who have fallen away, standing at the crossroads and welcoming the outcast.⁴⁷ We are called above all to be a contemplative presence in the world, discerning how to respond to changing landscapes; telling one another what is happening wherever we find ourselves, how we feel called to respond and inviting support from one another.

We need to have these global conversations. We have the communication tools to connect with one another worldwide. Recently at UISG we united sisters worldwide with the sisters in Washington who engaged in an act of civil disobedience to bring attention to the inhumane conditions, especially for children, in migrant detention centres. We could affirm and support the recent letter sent by 62 enclosed communities of Carmelite and Poor Clare sisters to the President and Prime Minister of

Italy deploring the treatment of migrants. We know that the presence of God is all around us and that we are connected to each other through ties both visible and invisible. We are being invited “to walk the journey of our lives tenderly holding each other’s hands (together with the hands of the least of our sisters and brothers) knowing all the while that it is Christ who is our veiled and shining companion.”⁴⁸ Living in Rome gives me a window seat at the life and times of Pope Francis. His is a leadership of global transformation. He shows us⁴⁹ how to blend our personal journey through life in this world with the simultaneous journey of humanity moving towards God. He holds in balance many of the elements presented this morning. He witnesses how the leader must be immersed in the world with eyes open to its joys and sufferings, with a heart broken from sharing the everyday struggle of the people, while at the same time withdrawing to contemplate the face of Jesus.

Pope Francis knows himself deeply, acknowledges his vulnerability as a person, as “called but flawed” constantly asking for the support of our prayers. This support enables him to transcend his limitations in service of others with tenderness and mercy. Finally, he demonstrated that leadership involves a creative interplay between past, present and future where “the memory of our roots” gives us “courage in the face of the unknown”⁵⁰- a courage that understands fidelity as “a change, a blossoming and a growth.”⁵¹ Ultimately, as leaders you and I are being called to lead “communities of change faithful to the ongoing and unending quest for God in this changing place and time.”⁵² The journey continues but we know that God’s grace accompanies us.

¹ Brene Brown, YouTube, Ted Talk on Vulnerability.

² Pope Francis, Address to the National Conference of the Italian Church, Cathedral of St. Maria in Fiore, Florence, Nov. 10, 2015.

³ Passion for Christ, Passion for Humanity: Act of the Congress on Consecrated Life (Paulines Publication of Africa: Nairobi, 2005), 27.

⁴ Ibid., 26.

⁵ Ibid., 25.

⁶ Ibid., 27.

⁷ Pope Francis, Apostolic Letter, Year of Consecrated Life, 21 November. 2014

⁸ Ibid.,

⁹ Sr. Raphael Consideine, Presentation Sister.

¹⁰ John Shea, “Theological Assumptions and Ministerial Style” in *Alternative Futures for Worship in Alternatives Futures for Worship*, vol. 6 Leadership Ministry in Community, ed. M.A. Cowan (Collegeville, Minn: Liturgical Press, 1987), 105-28.

¹¹ Is. 54:2.

¹² Pope Francis, *Witnesses of Joy: Apostolic Letter to all Consecrated Persons on the Occasion of the Year of Consecrated Life*, #1.

¹³ Ibid., #2.

¹⁴ Ibid., #1.

¹⁵ Pope Francis, *Witness of Joy*, # 2.

¹⁶ Pope Francis, *Theology of Tenderness*, September 13, 2013

¹⁷ Mt 17,19;21,21.

¹⁸ Walter Kasper. *Pope Francis’ Revolution of Tenderness and Love: Theological & Pastoral Perspectives*. New York: Paulist Press, 2015.

¹⁹ Gen. 18

²⁰ Marianne Moyaert, “Biblical, Ethical and Hermeneutical Reflections on Narrative Hospitality,” in Richard Kearney & James Taylor ed. *Hosting the Stranger: Between Religions*

²¹ Benedict XVI, Apostolic Letter, “Porta Fidei”: For the Indication of the Year of Faith, 11 October 2011, #13.

²² Ibid., #10.

²³ Patricia Jordan FSM, *Shifting Sands and Solid Rock* (Herefordshire: Gracewing Publication, 2015), 14.

²⁴ CICALSAL, *Keep Watch, To Consecrated Men and Women, Journeying in the Footsteps of God*, 8th September, 2014.

²⁵ Brian O’Leary, *Radical and Free: Musings on the Religious Life* (Messenger Publications: Dublin, 2016), 5. ²⁶ Introduction to the Fourth Edition by Norma E. Casntu and Aida Hurtado in *Gloria Anzaldua, Borderlands: La Frontiera – The New Mestiza*, 4th Edition (San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 2012), 6.

²⁷ Anzaldua, *Borderlands: La Frontiera – The New Mestiza*, 6.

²⁸ Pope Francis, *Feast of the Presentation of the Lord*, February 2, 2017.

²⁹ Beldon C. Lane, *The Solace of Fierce Landscapes: Exploring Desert and Mountain Spirituality* (London: Oxford University Press; 8th edition, February 26, 2007), 44.

- 30 Ibid.,
- 31 Richard Rohr, Daily Meditation for Holy Saturday,
- 32 Lane, *The Solace of Fierce Landscapes*, 25.
- 33 Ibid.
- 34 Ibid., 30.
- 35 Marie Chin RSM, "Towards a New Understanding of Cultural Encounter in Our Communities" in *Horizon*, Winter 2003, 16.
- 36 John Paul Lederach, *Moral Imagination: The Art and Soul of Building Peace* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004).
- 37 Lederach, *The Moral Imagination*, 27.
- 38 Ibid., 77.
- 39 Ibid., 78.
- 40 Mark Johnson, *Moral Imagination: Implications of Cognitive Science for Ethics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 212.
- 41 Ibid., 39.
- 42 Ibid.
- 43 Fr. Daniel Ruff, SJ, Bulletin of Old St. Joseph's Church in Philadelphia, Advent 2008.
- 44 Joseph M. Lozano, "Leadership: The Being Component" in *J. Business Ethics*, Published online 23 March 2016,
- 45 Pope Francis, Vigil of Pentecost with Ecclesial Movements, 18 May 2013.
- 46 Pope Francis, Apostolic Letter on the Occasion of the Year of Consecrated Life, #3.
- 47 EG, #24.
- 48 Ibid.
- 49 Chris Lowney, *Pope Francis: Why He Leads The Way He Leads – Lessons from the First Jesuit Pope* (Loyola Press: Chicago 2018).
- 50 Pope Francis quoted in Robert Moynihan, *Pray for Me: The Life and Spiritual Vision of Pope Francis: First Pope from the Americas* (Image Press: New York, 2013), 209.
- 51 Sam Sawyer, *Jesuit Post*, 2013.
- 52 Joan Chittister, OSB, *What Are You Looking For: Seeking the God Who is Seeking You* (Paulist Press, New Jersey, 2019), 11.

Address to LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE OF WOMEN RELIGIOUS 2019 LCWR ASSEMBLY –
SCOTTSDALE, ARIZONA – downloaded from: <https://lcwr.org/calendar/lcwr-assembly>

Possible activity

Bafa Bafa

By the TOOLBOX GROUP

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

BaFa' BaFa' is a face-to-face learning simulation. It is intended to improve participants' cultural competency by helping them understand the impact of culture on the behavior of people and organizations. Participants experience "culture shock" by traveling to and trying to interact with a culture in which the people have different values, different ways of behaving and different ways of solving problems.

- To help participants understand the idea, power and importance of culture
- To help participants learn how to value cultural differences
- To prepare individuals to go to different cultures
- To help members of a dominant culture value people from other cultures
- To reduce inhibitions in binational or international groups

TIME

1 to 2 hours for the exercise, 1 to 2 hours for the debriefing

NECESSARY MATERIALS

Two classrooms

Descriptions of two different cultures on coloured paper (makes it easier) Nametags (half named "Alpha" in red, half named "Beta" in blue)

1 box of 100 small paperclips for Alphans 1 box of 100 large binder clips for Betans

A special wristband to be taped on the Alpha leader's wrist

STEP-BY-STEP DESCRIPTION OF THE ACTIVITY

Two simulated cultures are created: an Alpha culture and a Beta culture. The teacher/facilitator briefs the participants on the general purposes of the simulation and then assigns them membership in either the Alpha or Beta culture. To each of the two cultures belongs a certain behavior, which corresponds to an implicit cultural code (for example, two antagonistic civilizations: a collective culture based on common good, solidarity, body contact), and an economic culture based on trade and profit, individualism as well formal and distant relations. Each group moves into its own area where members are taught the values, expectations and customs of their new culture, without knowing anything about the other civilization.

To know better their own culture, the following key questions may be helpful:

- How do we deal with each other?
- What makes us happy?
- Is my culture peaceful or warlike?
- Will my culture rule, observe, adapt?
- What is the goal of my culture (love, rule ...)?
- Religion of my culture: Is there an idol or a priestess who is worshipped or any other form of religious activity?
- What do people in my culture live from and can I get what I need?
- ...

In addition, behaviors and forms of expression should be considered and practiced for the following emotions and needs:

- Uncertainty, fear of strangers, frightening situations
- Rejection
- Welcome (from strangers and group members)
- Affection
- Pleasure
- Love and hate
- How to get help?
- What to do to help?
- ...

Once all the members understand and feel comfortable with their new culture, each culture sends an observer to the other. During the “observer” period, groups will roleplay the values, expectations, norms, and customs of their new culture. The observers attempt to learn as much as possible about the other culture without directly asking questions. After a xed time, each observer returns to his or her respective culture and reports on what he or she observed.

Based on the report of the observer, each group develops hypotheses about the most effective way to interact with the other culture. After the hypotheses have been formulated, the participants take turns visiting the other culture in small groups. After each visit, the visitors report their observations to their group. The group uses the data to test and improve their hypotheses. When everyone has had a chance to visit the other culture, the simulation ends.

The participants then come together in one group to discuss and analyze their experience. If the purpose of the training is to train a person to interact or travel to a different culture, then the facts of that culture are presented as part of the discussion. If the focus is on diversity, then the discussion and analysis focuses on methods for creating a school culture that allows everyone to feel safe, feel included, be productive, and do their best work. The definition of a culturally competent person then, not only includes the ability to adapt or interact with people who are different, it means being able to design and sustain a work culture that includes everyone and allows each person to do their best work.

It is very important that the groups, together with the teacher(s), are in a position to reflect and answer the following questions:

- Feelings when you were preparing to take on the role of a new culture?
- Feelings as suddenly strangers came into your 'home'?
- Feelings as you visit a culture whose language, gestures and behaviors are unfamiliar?
- Did the other culture react the way you expected them to? Why (not)?
- How did you try to adapt?
- Can you try to explain the culture of the other group?
- Can you explain your own culture?
- What does this game remind you of?

THE BETA CULTURE

OVERVIEW:

- You are a capitalist society, and you put great emphasis on wealth accumulation.
- This is a very individualistic culture that values the person over the group. You want to get ahead and work hard to get there, no matter what the cost.
- There is no hierarchy in the Beta culture. Everyone is equal, including the genders.

GREETINGS & SMALL TALK:

- Greet each other with a nod of the head.
- You do not like to talk about the family or how much wealth people have. In a group, Betans like to talk about work.
- You do not like to stand close when talking or to be touched, especially on the shoulder. This is a huge insult. Betans will not do business with anyone who touches them on the shoulder and they will tell other Betans not to do business with them.
- When any person joins a group, he or she is readily welcomed into the conversation.

TRADING:

- You measure a person's value by how well he or she performs in the marketplace, but you think that it is impolite to show how much wealth you have to others. You NEVER discuss your wealth.
- You are familiar with the Alphan culture, and you are very interested in obtaining their "clips." You also like to trade something similar called "clasps."
- Betans have a special trading language which they use with ANYONE who wants to trade. It means, "Can I have # of those?" as following (point to what you want):
 - *Ba* – one
 - *Ba F* – two
 - *Ba F, Ba* – three
 - *Ba F, Ba F* – four

THE ALPHA CULTURE

OVERVIEW:

- Choose a leader to wear the blue wristband.
- Leaders and people in high positions are highly regarded in your culture.
- You put great emphasis on group membership. The benefit of the group takes precedent over the benefit of any one individual.
- Relationships are extremely important. It is imperative that you do not say or do something that would make another Alphan feel bad or lose face.
- There is some gender bias in your culture. Men have more flexibility than women when it comes to communicating or getting things done with the exception of the leader if she is female.

GREETINGS:

- Always greet other Alphans using the Alphan greeting – both people grab the left arm just below the elbow (forearm) to shake. During the arm shake, say “How is your family?”.
- NEVER greet a non-Alphan (a visitor) with the left arm. Always use the right arm and do not shake it. If someone shakes your left arm, it means that they are angry with you.
- Women can only initiate a greeting with another woman, but men can initiate greetings with both genders. It is a big insult to break this rule.

SMALL TALK:

- Stand very close to each other and use a lot of body language when talking. Touch the person’s elbow or shoulder. If an Alphan does not do this, it means that they don’t like you. Alphans value personal contact and intimacy with everyone.
- You love and honor senior Alphans. When you are in a group, you love to talk about your family. You always allow a senior person to lead the conversation.
- If you are in a conversation and a new person enters the group, he or she must stand there and wait to be invited into the group by an Alphan.
- You are very friendly to those who follow your rules.

TRADING:

- You love to collect and trade “clips” which is your form of currency. After making small talk, request to trade “clips.” You want to get as many “clips” as possible that are the same style. You trade “clips” by simply asking another Alphan to trade. Alphans will always trade with another Alphan if they have what someone wants.
- Alphans love to adorn themselves with “clips” and they love to talk about how many “clips” they have.
- Alphans only trade “clips” with visitors if he or she greets them properly.

- Otherwise, the Alphan will ignore the visitor and walk away.
- Ba F, Ba in the Alphan language means “your father has no goats.” This is a huge insult. Alphans will not speak to anyone who says this to them.

For Reflection

Cultural humility is one construct for understanding and developing a process-oriented approach to competency. Hook, Davis, Owen, Worthington and Utsey (2013) conceptualize cultural humility as the “ability to maintain an interpersonal stance that is other-oriented (or open to the other) in relation to aspects of cultural identity that are most important to the [person]” (p. 2).

Three factors guide a sojourner toward cultural humility. The first aspect is a **lifelong commitment to self-evaluation and self-critique** (Tervalon & Murray-Garcia, 1998). Underlying this piece is the knowledge that we are never finished — we never arrive at a point where we are done learning. Therefore, we must be humble and flexible, bold enough to look at ourselves critically and desire to learn more. When we do not know something, are we able to say that we do not know? Willingness to act on the acknowledgement that we have not and will not arrive at a finish line is integral to this aspect of cultural humility as well. Understanding is only as powerful as the action that follows.

The second feature of cultural humility is a desire to **fix power imbalances** where none ought to exist (Tervalon & Murray-Garcia, 1998). Recognizing that each person brings something different to the proverbial table of life helps us see the value of each person. When practitioners interview clients, the client is the expert on his or her own life, symptoms and strengths. The practitioner holds a body of knowledge that the client does not; however, the client also has understanding outside the scope of the practitioner. Both people must collaborate and learn from each other for the best outcomes. One holds power in scientific knowledge, the other holds power in personal history and preferences.

Finally, cultural humility includes aspiring to **develop partnerships with people and groups who advocate for others** (Tervalon & Murray-Garcia, 1998). Though individuals can create positive change, communities and groups can also have a profound impact on systems. We cannot individually commit to self-evaluation and fixing power imbalances without advocating within the larger organizations in which we participate. Cultural humility, by definition, is larger than our individual selves — we must advocate for it systemically.
From: <https://www.apa.org/pi/families/resources/newsletter/2013/08/cultural-humility>

4 The experience of Intercultural Living

Video

<https://vimeo.com/386868624/d07766b061>

Scripture Passage

Road to Emmaus Lk 24:13-35

Reading

“Interculturality in Religious Congregations: Challenges and Promise”

Marianna Jung, FMM

Panel on Formation through the Lens of Interculturality

I. Introduction – My Story

I am a member of the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary. We are an international religious congregation of close to 6100 members in 74 countries - 80 different nationalities. In Canada, we have 112 sisters of 20 different nationalities.

With my parents and my younger brother, I immigrated to Canada 34 years ago. My sister, who was married and already living in Canada, sponsored our coming. Without much knowledge of English, I started a new life in Edmonton. Learning a new language and facing a new culture, new weather and a new way of living was not easy. Five years later, I entered the Congregation of the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary. My formation in the Pre-novitiate and Novitiate was in Calgary and Edmonton. After my first profession, I went to Winnipeg. Since Canada did not fully recognize what I had studied in Korea, I studied again and I finished my B.Ed. at the University of Winnipeg. Afterwards I was sent on mission to Nunavut for eight years. Another new life had started... another new culture and a new language- Inuktitut. I did not learn much Inuktitut, only all the prayers, since all the children spoke English.

Then again I was called to go to a new mission, Madoc, Ontario, a place where I could speak English. Then I went to England for one year of Franciscan studies for formators, of course in English but... in another culture.

Then, I arrived in Gatineau, QC.

I remember that just before I returned to Canada, I was so afraid to go to Gatineau... Yes, it was partly because of my new mission as a novice mistress... but I was more afraid to be in a French community.

I was supposed to have learned French before I started my mission as a formator, but as you know, life does not always go as we plan. And yet, here I am!!!

II. Intercultural Community

How do we live in an intercultural community? How do we prepare our sisters and brothers to receive new members from other countries? For me, there is no one right answer. It all depends on each one's history and the circumstances in each congregation.

There is no one way to receive our sisters and brothers from other Provinces. Each one of us has to open his/her heart to receive his/her brothers and sisters. There is no formula, except love and faith. When a new member arrives in the Community, we usually ask the member to adapt to the new situation, but for me it doesn't work that way – it's not only the new member, but the whole community that has to adapt together. We have to create a new community. By welcoming others, our mission becomes a transformation. We come out from ourselves, from our shells, to welcome and to help fellow members of our Congregations to take up the mission which God has confided to us in Canada.

Sometimes when we are so used to doing things in one way, it is not easy to be disturbed. But we must leave our comfort zone and be disturbed for the sake of others, to help them to grow and adapt to our country, and to mission together in our religious community. We have to break out of our own routines to welcome new sisters and brothers.

We have to aim at intercultural living, not multicultural living.

- **For those who come to Canada, there are so many things to learn about life in Canada.**
- **And for those who receive others from other countries, there are also many things to learn about others' culture and their background, and how to share their own Canadian culture.**

For example, in our Novitiate, we had five novices from different cultural backgrounds over seven years. The first two novices were born in Canada, but their parents came from Europe – from the Czech Republic and the Netherlands. After that, we had two novices from the United States, an American-Korean and an American-Vietnamese, and another novice who came from Iraq. Our formation team was formed with three Sisters from different backgrounds – one Canadian (Québécoise), one Sister from Madagascar, and myself, Canadian-Korean.

The first thing we did was to get to know each other. Each one of us prepared information about our own country, culture, food, and our families. Each one presented this information to the group according to her own talents, using PowerPoint or showing photos. Through all this sharing, we learned and came to know about each person and became a part of each other's lives. We celebrated important feasts together, for example, we celebrated the Feast of Saint Nicholas, putting our boots near the fireplace and waiting with anticipation. We saw that the next day St. Nicholas had passed by to give us chocolate! We celebrated Chinese New Year and received blessings from the older Sisters, and of course, we received money, too, with the blessing. This is a very special custom in much of Asia. But we also celebrated Canadian and American feasts. We enjoyed a variety of foods: Canadian, American, Vietnamese, Korean, European, Malagasy, and Iraqi food.

Our liturgy was prepared according to each one's creativity.

So in this way, we celebrated everyone's differences and came to know and appreciate one another, becoming a part of each other's life. With all of our sharing, the whole world became our home. And that is as our Mother Foundress said: "The whole world is our home."

Of course, it was not always easy to understand one another because of difference in culture and difference in background.

An Experience of Deeper Understanding

Once I planned with our three novices to go to the United States, as we are an inter-province novitiate. We were planning to attend a Franciscan formation session. The Iraqi novice came to me and she excused herself from going to the USA as she said she did not know much English. I encouraged her to attend with us because I knew her English was good enough to follow the session. So she came. After the session, we visited and stayed with our Sisters in New York. The Sisters arranged for us to go to the 9/11 site and memorial. The memorial connected us with the memory of the innocent people who had been killed. In silence, we were able to pray and we found it very moving. We were also touched by the OFM Chaplain who had been killed and we prayed for him. When we came back to Canada, we shared our experiences. The Iraqi novice shared with me that it was a very touching experience to remember all those innocent people who had died, but for her it was not an easy experience to be in the United States. She also thought, "How many innocent people in Iraq have been killed by American soldiers?" And she thought how all these people had not been recognized with memorials. She felt it was not fair. Those who lost loved ones could not just consider them "collateral damage" as military reports did. Between us there was silence. I didn't know what to say. I simply said, "Sorry!" I had never thought of how she would feel going to the United States, and I hadn't thought about how her experiences in Iraq would impact her trip there. This was my moment of understanding and conversion.

III. For those who are arriving in a new country or community and for those who are receiving, we should keep in mind three P-words for both sides:

Prayer

Patience

To be patient with myself To be patient with others

To be patient with the circumstances

Perseverance

A. Prayer, Patience, and Perseverance for those who are arriving in Canada

1. Prayer:

We are all here together because of God's calling. We should never forget why we are here in this mission; it is because God has united us, calling us to live together and to follow him. As Pope Francis said, "The consecrated life is a call to incarnate the Good News, to follow Christ, the crucified and risen one, to take on Jesus's way of living and acting as the Incarnate Word in relation to the Father and in relation to our brothers and sisters." In prayer, God gives us strength. In prayer we bring reconciliation among our brothers and sisters. In prayer, with Him, we build our community together and this is why our prayer life is very important. It is our foundation. Christ is the centre of our community life.

2. Patience – In patience there are three different parts.

1) The first is to be patient with oneself

We must be patient with ourselves. When we come to a new place, with enthusiasm we want to do so many things, but we cannot, and there are many things that we have to learn about and adjust to first.

Our sisters and brothers arriving in Canada have often already accomplished so much at home or in other missions, but when they come to Canada, they are limited by language and cultural differences and can easily become discouraged.

We should encourage those arriving to be patient with themselves because it takes time to learn new things. At first they might feel alone, shy, and uncomfortable in their new surroundings. But with time everything will become easier.

2) To be patient with others

They will see different ways of reacting to others and different ways of doing things. Misunderstanding could happen because of not knowing different cultures. For example, when one of our young sisters came to Canada, it was so difficult for her to see an elderly sister doing cleaning, washing her clothes and hanging them outside. She tried to help her as she did in her country - that is one of the ways of respecting elders in her country. The elderly Canadian sister became frustrated and upset with this younger sister. She could not understand why she was always disturbing her, and the newcomer could not understand why this elderly sister was so angry with her and always avoided her.

3) To be patient with the circumstances

They will see that many things are not what they are used to in their own country – they have to learn what it means to be in Canada, accepting Canadian culture – and then try to understand others in the light of their cultural insight.

Why do they do things like this in Canada?

Why do they do things this way in the community?

Questions will arise since our circumstances are certainly not the same, and the way things operate is not the same. For example, the work that we do in Canada is different from other countries because we do not have large institutions. We have to go out and look for our own jobs, so our work-life becomes more individualistic. There are not many young members, so the life style can be so different.

One Sister who had arrived told me, “I don’t want to see any more snow. I am tired of looking at snow!” Even though she was so excited and happy to see snow when she had first arrived.

St. Vincent de Paul reminds us “Don’t go faster than Providence.”

3. Perseverance

All the differences those arriving have to face might become overwhelming and lead to discouragement. For instance, in their country they might have accomplished many things, but here they may not know the language or know the system. The limitations might lead to an experience of nothingness. Then the question comes, “What am I doing here?” At such a time, they need to continue and persevere.

When I came to Canada from Korea, one person told me to wait three years and then decide what to do, but before that, I should not make any decision about going back to Korea. This is how long the adjustment to a new country can take. I used to complain to God, “Why have You brought me here? If I were in Korea, I would already be a Sister; I could do so much more work for You.” Many trials come at the beginning of our mission in a new place, but that does not mean that we are in the wrong place.

B. Prayer, Patience, and Perseverance for those who are receiving sisters and brothers

1. Prayer

The newcomers must feel desired, wanted, accepted and loved as they are, and not as we want them to be. This quality of receiving rests upon prayer and the conversion of heart.

In our Constitutions we say, “Prayer, which is of itself evangelizing, stimulates and strengthens our

missionary thrust. It welcomes and makes its own the cultural riches of peoples, as it brings before God their hopes and their praise". (FMM constitutions 12)

2. Patience

1) The first is to be patient with oneself

For those of us who are receiving sisters or brothers on Mission, we too must remember to be patient with ourselves. At times, it might feel very stressful to accept other cultures which we have never experienced, and sometimes we might think, "Why can I not accept others?" We are adjusting too.

For example, often people ask me where I come from, and then immediately, before I can answer, they ask, "Are you Chinese?" When I say I am Korean, sometimes they will say, "Oh, Japanese, Korean and Chinese are all the same to me." I respond, "Yes, just as Americans and Canadians are the same." And then their eyes open wide, and right away, they say, "No, no! We are so different." It is the same with us: we, too, are different. So we should not judge; we have to understand the other culture before making assumptions.

2) To be patient with others

Be patient with others, with new sisters and brothers. Try to accept their differences and try to understand. As in the Prayer of St. Francis, seek more to understand than to be understood. And try to understand their culture and where they are coming from; put yourself in their shoes. Try to imagine how you would feel if you did not understand the language spoken by most of the sisters you live with.

The way of doing things and the way of speaking are so different in each culture, so we need to be patient with newcomers and let them be themselves. They will learn slowly in their own time. In the beginning, they will speak slowly and be hard to understand. That's when we need to be patient and encouraging.

Remember, these are not teenagers. Often they have already lived full lives in their countries, taken responsibilities. In Canada, they start over. But just because they don't know the language, it doesn't mean they do not know anything. We have to give them the opportunity to try things in Canada for the first time, and encourage them when they can't do it perfectly, or in the way they did something back home. Those receiving sisters and brothers should be patient with their mistakes, praise their efforts and achievements.

3) To be patient with the circumstances

While completing various projects within the community or the Province, we need patience to allow the new member of the community to integrate. Previously, when there were only Canadians, naturally things were done differently, but as new members arrive from different countries, we see the shape of the Province beginning to change. For instance, in the cafeteria, there is not only *tourtière* and potatoes, but now we serve noodles and rice as well! Even when there are positive changes, though, it still takes time to adjust to a new way of doing things.

3. Perseverance

For those of us receiving newcomers to the Community, we too must persevere – even though we might be afraid that we are losing our identity as our own Canadian Province. We should think of it this way: we are not losing our identity, but building a new identity. It is our turn to receive our brothers and sisters from other countries with the same graciousness and hospitality that Canadians were received in mission lands in the past. But even so, we know it takes time to grow and build something new.

4. Conclusion

It is well worth our while to deepen our lives through Prayer, Patience, and Perseverance. By welcoming brothers and sisters into our Provinces, we are creating the Kingdom of God among us, with joy and hope.

I am happy to be an FMM in Canada. I have come a long way. As an immigrant with a vocation, I was received in Canada by our Sisters who have loved me as I am and have shown confidence in me. Now I am happy to receive other sisters from different countries.

We have different cultures and different languages, but we have a common language – the language of Love.

It is in faith that intercultural community is built: God appeals to our freedom to make an active contribution. It is in faith that we receive the sisters and brothers He gives us, accepting our differences through an attitude of listening, of trust, of forgiveness and of respect for each one's mystery and path. We support one another on our journey towards the Lord.

Marianna Jung, FMM

Workshop for Leaders and Formation Personnel Toronto (Mary Ward Centre) October 21, 2015

Downloaded from: [www: crc-canada.org](http://www.crc-canada.org)

Possible activity

Our intercultural misunderstandings can reveal to us our cultural assumptions and how these may clash with the assumptions of another culture. If we reflect on what happened we might clarify the different cultural frameworks. Then we can sort out differences and respond more appropriately to members of another culture with whom we are living or working.

1. Negative Red Flags¹

Objective

To realize that our own strong emotional reactions can be signals that alert us to a clash of cultural values or assumptions. With this awareness we can look deeper and discover a different way of interpreting what has dismayed us.

Time needed: 45 - 90 minutes

Procedure

1. Divide the group into small groups of 4 – 6.
2. Distribute the handout below.
3. A member of the group reads the handout incidents and the group members share similar personal incidents they had with cultural others. Before the end the group selects one of the best personal examples to share in the plenary group.
4. In the plenary group the reporter from each small group tells the group's selected incident and the emotional signal which was experienced as a negative red flag
5. The facilitator leads a discussion on how to use negative red flags for greater cultural awareness

¹ This is adapted from H. Ned Seelye ed. *Experiential Activities for Intercultural Learning*. (Yarmouth, ME: Intercultural Press, 1996) 191-202.

Points that can be made:

- Recognize the extreme emotional reaction or judgmental attitude as a warning signal that there is a clash of culture involved in this incident that we should investigate.
- Find out from another foreigner or from a more experienced compatriot how a person from the other culture might understand the behavior that has impacted negatively on us.
- Then check with members of the other culture involved (especially if they have lived in your culture) how they understand the behavior and what is its historical and cultural background.
- Look for parallels between the two cultures when a red flag occurs. For example a small bribe to get a bureaucratic permission or expedite a process is accepted as normal in many poorer countries as is getting the help of a friend to find a job, buy something cheaply or expedite some business in a Western country. Seeing the structural similarity will prevent us from feeling morally superior to other cultures.
- If we interpret another's behavior according to the rules of our culture we can make mistakes. Use emotional reactions as signals that there is something that needs to be investigated. This can help to reduce intercultural misunderstandings.

HANDOUT 1

Negative Red Flag - an instinctive negative evaluation of the behavior of members of an unfamiliar culture.

A. "They are rude"

- 1) Indo-Fijians in the family do not usually say please when they ask for something. They seem to demand and shout at someone else to get or do what they want. This can seem very impolite to Fijians or Europeans. Actually it comes from a code that gives authorities or elders the right to demand service from younger family members or from social or work inferiors. This is not felt as impolite or resented by the people involved.
- 2) When a Korean or a Fijian meets a visitor on the road the local asks where s/he is going. This can seem very intrusive and inquisitive to a Westerner. In fact it is the equivalent of "how are you?" in English - a polite expression of interest that is not seeking specific information.
- 3) Enquiring about an associate's wife is a normal politeness in most Western cultures. But asking after his wife may shock some Muslims. It indicates an improper interest in a very personal relationship. This applies to cultures where women are markers of the honor of the family and male family members are their protectors. Commenting on how pretty a child is can be very off-putting for parents in some cultures because it may denote envy and the application of the evil eye that could result in harm to the child. In these cases the Westerner seems rude and dangerous.
- 4) A visitor to the U.S. is talking with some North Americans when one of them produces a packet of cigarettes, takes one, begins smoking it, and replaces the packet in his pocket. This can seem very impolite and even hostile to foreigners who in their cultures would never light up without first offering one to everyone else present.

To think “they are treating me rudely” can turn a person away from relating with the people in question but to think “they are doing things that would seem rude back home” leaves the door open to investigate how it is understood in the society in question. This improves the chances of making ongoing and understanding contact.

B. “They are Dirty.”

Different groups have different definitions of cleanliness.

- 1) Indo-Fijians will consider clothes worn on one day dirty and will consider someone dirty who wears the same clothes two days in a row. They would be shocked at someone who would pray first thing in the morning before going to the toilet and having a bath.
- 2) Westerners consider Indians or Chinese who spit on the street dirty but Easterners think that it is very dirty for Westerners to blow their nose and keep the dirty handkerchief on their person for days. Indians consider it dirty to wipe one’s bottom with paper, because it cannot clean properly whereas Westerners are disgusted by the Indian custom of using water and the fingers of the left hand to clean the anus.
- 3) Westerners take a bath, and soak, wash and rinse their bodies in the same water, though they would never wash their clothes in that way. Japanese who use different water for each of these stages consider the Western way hard to understand, even dirty.
- 4) Westerners consider it disgusting to eat dog whereas Muslims consider it disgracefully dirty to eat pork and Hindus consider it sinful to eat beef.

If you find yourself recoiling from some custom or behavior in another person or people as dirty see it as a red flag that needs to be explored with people who know the significance of that custom or behavior.

C. “They are Stupid.”

Cultures differ in what they consider intelligent or stupid.

- 1) People from Japan are unimpressed by the French custom of standing in line in a shop to get a product and then in another line to pay for it. Being unused to such a system they may react with a quick “they are stupid”. This practice denotes a security arrangement where only the owner handles the cash. In Japan where internalized controls are sufficient to keep employees honest there is no need for such an arrangement.

Our reaction to different ways of thinking or speaking or behaving may lead us to consider others as stupid or irrational. We should realize that this reaction is a red flag and a signal to reflect. “Something is going on here which seems stupid to me. I wonder if it seems stupid to them?”

Additional Red Flags

“They are hypocrites”; “They are cold”; “They are dishonest”; “It’s ridiculous”; “It’s incredible”; “They are inscrutable”; “They are primitive”; “They don’t care about others”; “They are like children”; “They are untrustworthy”; “It makes me furious”; “They are unfriendly”; “It is disgusting”; “They are years behind us”. “They use others for their own purposes”.

HANDOUT 2

POSITIVE RED FLAGS

An unexpected and exciting surprise from behavior of members of an unfamiliar culture.

Objective

To clarify that some situations may seem better or more pleasant than they really are. We may be missing something. Inappropriate expectations may lead to disappointment because we have read more into it than is there or because there is an expectation of reciprocity or of consequences of which we are not at first aware.

Time: 60 minutes.

Procedure

1. Participants, with copies of the incidents below, divide into small groups of 4 –6.
2. Participants read the incidents in turn and discuss the questions.
3. Discuss in plenary what was common to the first three stories. Any signals?

A. Friendly Americans

A foreigner, Vijay, comes to the U.S. and is struck by the friendliness of the Americans. He phones home and says that he is really struck by the warm people who smile a lot, wished him a good day, invited him home for a meal and even invited him to stay a night. He phoned home and said enthusiastically, “Americans are so friendly. We are going to be close friends and see a lot of each other”.

- On what does Vijay’s base his view of Americans? Has he made an accurate appraisal?
- Will the Americans Vijay meets remember later their invitations for him to drop by?
- How durable are friendships with strangers in the United States?
- To what do friendships in the U.S. obligate you to?
- Are obligations of friendship the same in other cultures?

B. Lets Have a Beer

A Fijian girl was on a cross-cultural immersion experience with an Indo-Fijian family. The older brother of the man in whose family she was staying invited her to have some drinks with him. Delighted, she accepted. Later in the night when they had finished 3 or 4 bottles of beer he asked her to have sex. She refused and went to the house where she was staying. She was upset later when the family she was staying with accused her of flirting with their relative.

- Why did the family accuse the girl of flirting?
- Did either the Fijian girl or the Indian man have unrealistic expectations?
- Would this kind of misunderstanding happen in other countries too?
 - Under what conditions can men and women develop close friendships that do not involve sexual intimacy?

C. My House is Your House

A North American botanist was visiting a Mexican colleague. The Mexican's gardener showed him around and afterwards invited him home for a cup of coffee. The North American was struck by the poverty of the adobe house which had the minimum of furniture but had a beautiful serape weaving on the wall. He commented on how nice it was. The Mexican immediately took it down and presented it to him as a gift. The North American was embarrassed but as the Mexican was insistent he eventually took it. At home he recounted the story to his friends and said how generous Mexicans are.

- Should the North American have taken the gift?
- If no, how could he have got out of the situation without giving offence?
- If yes, should the American have given something in return?
- If a return gift, should it be of similar value or involve as much sacrifice as for the Mexican?
- What are the obligations of gift giving? Do they differ across cultures?

D. Who is responsible for the child

A missionary priest had an affair with a woman and she became pregnant. He did not want to marry her. Her parents were upset but continued to support the woman. The priest's superiors were informed. They asked the priest to go for counseling and to consider carefully his obligations to the woman and their child. Other priests in the congregation felt ashamed and confused. Some people in the area were watching closely and critically what was going to happen.

- What do you think is the right thing for the priest to do?
- What should be done for the child and its mother?
- What should the superiors of the religious congregation do?
- What do you think would happen:
 - a) if the priest and his superiors were Western?
 - b) if the priest was not Western but his superiors were?
 - c) if the priest was Western but his superiors were non-Western?

For Reflection

perhaps there is only one distinction that matters: those who are learning to love their neighbors and those who remain indifferent to them"

— Mary Jo Leddy

5 Being the minority

Video

<https://vimeo.com/388458024/c12378a3d1>

Scripture Passage

Syrophonician woman Mk 7:24-30

Reading

Intercultural Life as a Sign of Prophetic Hope - Part 2

Sr. Adriana Carla Milmanda, SSpS



How to Live in an Intercultural Key?

Culture, as we have been able to outline it, is something that goes beyond all the areas, aspects, and facets of our life. It is the very medium through which we organize our perception of reality, build a collective sense of the world that surrounds us (material and immaterial), and communicate. Hence, culture is compared to the lenses through which we look. At the same time, it is also compared to an iceberg, because culture permeates our life so intimately that it becomes impossible to know it objectively and to reach the deepest tones that give our lenses their color. Our values, moral codes, preferences, sense of respect, sense of authority, sense of order, our management of time, etc. ... everything is crossed by the culture and the cultures of the groups of belonging in which we have been socialized. For me, this was a fascinating discovery that I was only able to recognize when I found myself in Fiji, in a culture so different from own.

How, then, can we open ourselves to this reality of multiculturalism and start living in the key of interculturality? How can fear or the dangerous mere tolerance of “different” be overcome so that we can begin to go out to meet other men and women? Interculturality, more than a topic, is a process; it is a new paradigm that wants to respond to the reality that surrounds us and imposes itself on us; it is a key from which to re-read our life and mission as consecrated persons in today’s world.

Within the time at our disposal, I would like to highlight at least three elements that, according to my experience, are essential when it comes to finding ways to begin to introduce this new paradigm in our communities:

1. **Preparation:** since it is a counter-cultural option, intercultural life requires dedicating time and effort to the preparation of the Sisters. This preparation includes:
 - Basic knowledge of the traits and salient characteristics of the interacting cultures (nationality, ethnicity, generation, education, socio-economic origin, etc.). Instead of focusing only on what unites us (which is very good, and it is very good to nurture it), interculturality also challenges us to explore, value, and capitalize what differentiates us.

- The creation of a “safe space” of trust and mutual care, where one can express oneself freely without fear of being judged and/or labeled.
 - The use of various strategies that help to maintain the motivation that leads to going out to meet and to welcome the “difference” by overcoming the difficulties that will occur in communication.
2. Intentionality: prior motivation is an element that must lead us to sustain, over time, the intentional effort to build on the basis of the differences. Intentionality requires growth in intercultural sensitivity by looking for:
- tools that favor
 - communication (verbal and non-verbal) and
 - the resolution of both expressed and latent conflicts.
 - personal and community work that strengthens and develops
 - resilience capacity and
 - detects in time the dangerous conformist attitude that is content with a simple “tolerance” of the difference.
3. Spirituality: intercultural life, as a proposal that emerges from our “Catholic” (i.e., “universal”) faith, is a life-long personal and communitarian process of conversion. Ethnocentrism (taking our culture as the center of the world and the norm for measuring other cultures), cultural stereotypes and their consequent prejudices are present in the world, in the Church and in each of us. Recognizing this and opening, ourselves personally and as a community, to deconstruct them implies setting out on a path of transformation or conversion. As a spiritual path, intercultural life and mission is not so much a goal but rather a search and a process. There are no recipes, nor are there quick solutions to the conflicts that it entails. Rather, interculturality challenges us to live with the paradoxes and the gray zones of the liminal spaces that open us to transformation and growth. This is precisely why intercultural life has the fragility and power of a “sign.”

3. The Fragility and Power to Become a Sign

Signs give us clues, call our attention and point us to something that goes beyond themselves. They are concrete, they are temporary, and they must be correctly interpreted and decoded. Now, for all these reasons, signs are fragile and limited... but they also have an extraordinary symbolic power that can capture our imagination and connect us with the transcendent, with the unseen values, the meaning of life, utopia, hope, and faith.

In this sense, the contribution that the consecrated life can make to the reflection and praxis of interculturality in today’s world is unique and urgently needed. In fact, interculturality, devoid of its symbolic potential and its horizon of a Project that transcends it (the Project of the Kingdom), runs the risk of becoming a new colonialism, a new form of manipulation in the hands of the most powerful of the day. It can be used as an instrument in the service of the logic of an economic and political system that is inherently exclusive and imposes itself without measuring costs or consequences for the most vulnerable, broken, and humiliated cultures of millions of people who are “crying out” to survive.

On the contrary, interculturality, as a spiritual path, can give us and the world a totally different alternative. Today, religious life, immersed as it is in an increasingly globalized world, is called to respond to the signs of the times, by becoming a cross-cultural and intercultural sign of the radically inclusive and egalitarian Project of the Kingdom of God:

²⁶ for in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith. ²⁷ As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. ²⁸ There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus. (Gal 3:26–28)

This was the founding and revolutionary experience of the first communities and of the first disciples of Jesus! The radical and egalitarian inclusiveness of Jesus' proclamation and praxis was the characteristic identity of the first communities that gradually separated them from Judaism. However, this path was and remains a path of progress and setbacks made of key moments of personal and communitarian conversion. Let us remember, as one of the paradigmatic cases, for example, Peter's "conversion" in the text known as the "Conversion of Cornelius" (Acts 10:1–48). In this extraordinary account, preceded by the vision of the cloth in which Peter is "challenged" by God to eat animals that, for him, are culturally and religiously impure, he ends up breaking a whole series of taboos (receiving and lodging pagans, eating and fraternizing with them, entering their home and baptizing people who have not been previously circumcised) to state, to their total amazement and awe, the fact—which he himself had just grasped—that God shows no partiality:

³⁴ Then Peter began to speak to them: I truly understand that God shows no partiality, ³⁵ but in every nation, anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him. (Acts 10:34–35)

In Jesus himself we can trace his personal "conversion" from ethnocentrism, which he humanly shared with us, in his encounter with the Canaanite or Syro-Phoenician woman where Jesus lets himself be challenged and interpellated by her until he accepts to abandon a first, clearly excluding position. In this account, we see how Jesus lets her teach him that the Good News of God and of the Kingdom that he came to inaugurate was not limited only to the people of Israel (cf Mt 15:21–28; Mk 7:24–30).

The good news of the Spirit is that the historical conjuncture in which we find ourselves today invites us to assume the multiculturalism of our communities, societies, and pastoral services as a possibility for conversion and transformation instead of seeing it as a problem to be solved. It is not and will not be easy; it will not give us the security and stability that we have lost and long for. There are no recipes to ensure success. However, if interculturality, as a radically inclusive Project of the Kingdom that Jesus inaugurated, captures our imagination, it will have the extraordinary power to make our communities into the sign that today's divided, fragmented, and conflictual world needs and is calling for.

Let us imagine how our charisms can be re-founded through the encounter with the values of other cultures. Let us perceive the multifaceted wealth that they would acquire. Yet, this Easter will not come without a cross. Giving a real place to the intercultural implies "letting go" of that for which we, as an institution, have perhaps given our life and our passion for many years, in order to make room for the newness that is emerging. The "E" culture is the fruit of a process of synergy, where the result is greater than the simple sum of the parts.

4. The Urgency of an Intentional Choice Based on Prophecy and for Hope

Like any vocational process of call and conversion, interculturality is not only destined to our personal and/or communitarian growth, which only leads us to seek a more peaceful, comfortable, and tolerant life. Today, intercultural life and mission will become a sign of prophetic hope, if they are constructed as a new alternative lifestyle. The re-foundation of religious life today is impossible without interculturality as a sign of the times of the contemporary world.

Because humanity has become so scandalously divided and conflictual, we (individually and corporately) must make a choice. Either we prefer to continue sinning—through exclusion, separation, and the maintenance of limits—, daily eating and drinking our own trials... or we resolve to accept, today, God’s radical option for humanity and, with His help and our firmness, change our lives. There is no third way. Both, the future of humanity and the Church depend on this. (Anthony Gittins)

Intercultural life as an intentional option for religious communities that cross borders and open up to the “different,” deconstructing the “pretended” and anti-evangelical superiority of some over others, by becoming a “workshop” where, through life itself, different relationships between cultures are tested: relationships of service characterized by equality and not domination, mutual empowerment without hierarchies that belittle or stifle life, dialogue and not assimilation, encounter and not colonization, inculturation and inter- culture.

Yet, embracing interculturality based on the Project of the Kingdom is not just an intra- community exercise. The true fruitfulness of this praxis, which is daily at stake in the ad- intra life, is the potential prophetic impact that will turn it into hope for today’s world. Interculturality will be a sign of prophetic hope for humanity, if our own experience of living together, valuing and giving a mutually transforming place to “difference,” with the doors opening inwards, puts us on the path to go out to meet those who are different, marginalized, invisible, and exploited today.

Only those who have gone through the personal conversion from ethnocentrism to intercultural sensitivity will have eyes to see and care about the suffering of those who are invisible and excluded from the contemporary world. As in the parable of the “Good Samaritan,” only the “foreigner,” from whom nothing was expected, was the first to be able to see and then help the man lying on the roadside, renewing his hope and denouncing— implicitly and prophetically—the blindness of the Levite and the priest who had passed by... (cf Lk 10, 25-37).

We, too, if we let ourselves be challenged and enriched by the “foreign” and culturally “different” gaze, we will allow the re-foundation of our charisms, broadening the vision of our founders in a way that we cannot even perceive today. This is not an easy path nor will it be free of challenges, but if we respond to the signs of the times, confident that the Spirit is at work, then we can announce the good news of interculturality and denounce everything that denies it, with the strength and the richness of the radically inclusive Project of the Kingdom that Jesus inaugurated.

Downloaded from: www.mercyworld.org

Possible activity

What We Want You to Hear

Objective:

To assist listening between groups about their experiences and to promote intercultural sensitivity.

Procedure:

Each cultural groups reflects as a group on these questions:

- What do you want everybody in the others groups to hear about your experiences as a Filipino, Korean, Irish, Aotearoa/New Zealander? (It would be helpful to illustrate your points with examples that actually happened in the group or elsewhere)
- Is there anything you would like everybody in other groups to promise never again to do or say to you as Fijians, Australians etc.
- What things do you like in the other groups that you would like to see them continue doing?
- What kind of things would you like the other group to start doing that could be supportive of you?

The groups take time to answer these questions separately and to appoint a spokesperson. Then each group shares its reflections through its spokesperson in plenary session.

For Reflection

MINORITY

I was born a foreigner.

I carried on from there to become a foreigner everywhere

I went, even in the place planted with my relatives,
six-foot tubers sprouting roots, their fingers and faces pushing up
new shoots of maize and sugar cane.

All kinds of places and groups of people who have an admirable
history would, almost certainly, distance themselves from me.

I don't fit, like a clumsily-translated poem;
like food cooked in milk of coconut where you expected ghee or cream,
the unexpected aftertaste of cardamom or neem.

There's always that point where the language flips into an unfamiliar taste;
where words tumble over a cunning tripwire on the tongue;
where the frame slips, the reception of an image
not quite tuned, ghost-outlined, that signals, in their midst, an alien.

And so I scratch, scratch through the night, at this growing scab on black on white.

Everyone has the right to infiltrate a piece of paper.

A page doesn't fight back.

And, who knows, these lines may scratch their way into your head –

through all the chatter of community,

family, clattering spoons, children being fed –

immigrate into your bed, squat in your home, and in a corner, eat your bread,

until, one day, you meet the stranger sidling down your street,

realise you know the face simplified to bone,

look into its outcast eyes and recognise it as your own.

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6 Interculturality and Religious Life

Video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8LXdBWRBAcM>

Interview with Sr. Adriana Milmanda, Missionary Sister Servant of the Holy Spirit

Scripture Passage

Good Samaritan Lk 10:25-37

Reading

Beyond International and Multicultural: Prerequisites and Prospects for Intercultural Community Living

Anthony Gittens, CCSP

Stating the Thesis

From Atlanta to Accra, Boston to Buenos Aires, Columbus to Caracas -- and from Duquesne University to the Dominican Republic -- understandings and experiences of community and personal identity have changed significantly in a century. Geographical and social mobility have re-shaped local and international relations. With this in mind, I want to bring into relief both a general and a specific reality, and assess its implications. Having first identified the nature and purpose of any intercultural community, we will then consider how the notion of interculturality itself might pose a challenge and act as a stimulus both specifically, to international religious institutes, and more generally, to multicultural faith-communities, from parishes to voluntary associations to universities -- whose mission statements declare their commitment to forging moral and organic communities from the raw materials of their diverse ethnic, cultural and even religious membership.

The words international and multicultural are now common currency, but intercultural is less familiar or ambiguous. I believe international religious communities like the Spiritans must become increasingly and intentionally intercultural, and in an increasingly pluralistic world, parochialism must be countered and xenophobia or discrimination repudiated. Without a virtual tectonic shift from "international" to "intercultural," there will simply be no viable future for international religious faith communities. To establish and defend this thesis in four steps, I will first explore some contested terminology, then identify theological implications.

Third, I will clarify the challenge, and finally evaluate the prospects for achieving the tectonic shift itself.

From Monocultural to Intercultural: the Terminology

True communication depends on a high degree of mutual intelligibility; precision of language and a common vocabulary are prerequisites for our reflections today.

Monocultural and Bicultural

Historically, most non-nomads lived and died within a primary world of less than ten miles' radius and among people of a common language and culture. Relatively speaking, very few human beings are truly bicultural. Exceptionally, climate or hunger dictates a move, but usually a monocultural group is involved. Beyond "people like us" are "people not like us."

However, children enculturated within a stable domestic arena where each parent speaks a different native language can – and do – become bicultural quite naturally. Socialized in a bilingual context, perhaps benefitting from moving physically between the primary cultures of each parent, a child finds it perfectly natural to shift between two languages ("code-switching") and across geographical territories. But persons who grow up in one milieu and later encounter another culture and language may become bicultural only by deliberately learning each culture and language sufficiently for them to pass more or less freely between two worlds. Bicultural thus applies to someone living simultaneously in two cultural and linguistic worlds, as do many bilingual Mexican-Americans, Korean-Americans, and so on. But when a person deliberately leaves home more or less permanently, the appropriate term would be cross-cultural.

Cross-Cultural

Someone belonging originally to one culture ("culture A") but later moving beyond its confines to reside for a number of years in another environment (his or her "culture B"), may become cross-cultural. Members of the host community are perfectly "at home" (living in their own "culture A"), but the interloper is "out of place," not "at home," an outsider or stranger¹ who, being now in his or her "culture B," must therefore learn this new culture and its language. Moreover, to learn another culture is every bit as challenging as to learn another language. To assume that another culture can be informally "picked up" is naïve and dangerous, not to say arrogant and condescending.

The cross-cultural person will remain an outsider and cannot be fully assimilated culturally. But outsiders come in many shapes and forms, typically "participating" or "non-participating,"² and the former can be of great value to the insiders.³ But "non-participating outsiders" are at best culturally or morally irrelevant (like tourists), and at worst destructive (like invaders). Unsurprisingly, the host population will take its time, carefully scrutinizing incomers. This is necessary self-protection for local communities that often carry bad memories of previous ungracious and dangerous strangers. During this time, the incomer is expected to be learning the cultural rules, responsibilities and sanctions necessary for smooth day to day living. From the stranger's perspective, this is neither simple nor painless: it is a process of liminality. Becoming truly cross-cultural therefore, depends as much on the response of the locals as on one's own bona fides.⁴

Multicultural

Any neighborhood, parish, university or country comprising people of many cultures is de facto multicultural. But this says nothing about how they actually relate; that is a measure of interculturality. Human responses in a multicultural context range from simple avoidance to rank hostility or conventional courtesy to deep friendship; and differences may be eliminated (by reactions from genocide to assimilation), tolerated (by attitudes from indifference to unconcern), or managed. "Separate development" or simple mutual apathy would be negative management, leaving everyone in a state of enduring liminality. But more positively, differences can be managed by mutual cooperation and the encouragement of diversity, as one might create an orchestra or chorus. Often though, multicultural communities can be appropriately characterized as merely "people living together, separately."

Intercultural

From the 1950s as multinational companies and global commerce expanded, the study of cross-cultural contact was in vogue, as employment moved people away from home. Vocabulary was still unstable, and the words multicultural and intercultural were often used synonymously. Both theory and language derived largely from the social sciences of cultural anthropology, sociology, and psychology. Corporations were hiring people to travel and reside internationally, but also trying to provide needed skills for communicating with a variety of business partners. But today, and for decades now, such skills have been identified, widely taught, and acquired across the business world.

Christian missionaries had of course been exposed for centuries to cross-cultural living, and had accumulated much informal knowledge and experience. But as missions have increasingly operated as a two-way street and the reality of global Christianity has become clearer, the challenges posed by de facto multicultural faith communities and two-way cross-cultural living have become acute. Missiologists became increasingly aware of the cultural dynamics at work in mission situations, including “reverse mission” from Africa and Asia to Europe and America – that is, two-way cross-cultural living.

Social science is unconcerned with religious faith, but the subject of theology is, quite explicitly, God. So when theology adopts sociological language, it also adapts it, with the result that theologian and sociologist no longer speak quite the same language. Sociology used multicultural and intercultural as effectively synonymous – or else the intercultural focused on the social dynamics of international relations, while multicultural simply identified a social fact within neighborhoods or voluntary associations. But theologically, the word intercultural relates explicitly to God and/or to interpersonal relationships shaped and motivated by the faith commitment of the participants. Theologically speaking, intercultural community members are drawn from diverse cultural backgrounds but share an intentional commitment to fellowship, motivated not simply by pragmatic or commercial considerations but by a shared religious conviction and common mission. Recently, many communities have seen the challenges posed by the cultural differences among their members.

The near-bankruptcy of the standard assimilation model of recruitment to religious orders (“Come join us, and we will teach you to do things our way”) has been revealed, as the demands of true intercultural living and ministry have become increasingly clear. But many members of such communities remain unaware of, or struggle with the challenge (which is fast becoming a real imperative), while failing to profit from rich and hard-won gains from the social sciences. Intercultural living then, is a faith-based and lifelong process of conversion, emerging as a requirement of members of intentional, international religious communities (and some intentional multicultural groups like large parishes).⁵ Healthy intercultural living depends on the level of commitment and support generated by the members. Individuals vary in adaptability and learning-levels, but each one generates positive or negative energy; and a small, resistant group can generate enough negative energy to thwart the wider community.

Before identifying the dynamics of intercultural living, we must address culture itself, since this is the context for lived faith; there is no person without culture, and faith can only be lived culturally. We do not live our faith in a vacuum or outside a specific cultural context. But inter-cultural living is multi-cultural rather than mono-cultural, and nobody can be expected to live their faith in and through an entirely alien culture, or the dominant culture of the majority.

Culture

Most people too readily assume they understand culture, which is actually subtle and elusive. Recognizable under many forms, culture is constitutive of every human person raised in a social world. Yet no one is born with culture; and, in different circumstances, anyone might have become enculturated differently. Babies born and raised in Beijing by Chinese parents become culturally Chinese; but a neonate flown to Pittsburgh and adopted by Euro-American parents will become a person of Euro-American culture. Environment and socialization are critically important, and everyone has a particular culture or constellation of cultural traits. But since faith can only be expressed culturally, an intercultural community should value each person's cultural identity as gift. Each one's lived faith constitutes an alternative and legitimate way of being: Christian, Jew, or Muslim. Yet everyone's different perspectives, habits and propensities pose challenges to harmonious community living. The ability to live with, and not simply despite, cultural differences is a hallmark of an intercultural community. Here are five descriptive definitions of culture, specifically chosen for their implications for intercultural living.

Culture is6 “the [hu]man-made part of the environment”: what social groups do to the worlds they inhabit. Universally, culture is material (artifacts, buildings); institutional (law and order, kinship and economic systems, and religion); symbolic (orality, perhaps writing, and words-objects-gestures that “say the unsayable”); and moral (values and virtues [and their opposites, vices]). These are the “social glue” of society.

Second, culture is “the form of social life”: the way a social group normally behaves, including rule-breaking behaviors.

Standardized behavior must be interpreted through the underlying belief-and-thought system. But there is always a discrepancy between what people say they believe and what they actually do. Insiders (and appropriately informed outsiders) can interpret heroic or ignoble behavior. Every social system has both sin and grace, pathology and virtue, and needs effective sanctions.

Third, culture is “a meaning-making system”; supported by standards and rules, it makes intelligible communication possible. Theoretical linguistics distinguishes three helpful and contextual criteria for communication: grammaticality (strict and consistent conformity to the rules of grammar), acceptability (less formal, but appropriate and intelligible communicative interaction) and meaningfulness (simple, basic, but adequate information-transfer). People can communicate meaningfully, if not always with the perfect grammaticality of the pedant or perfectionist – something to remember in intercultural living. Again, linguistics explores the paradoxical “rule-governed creativity” that allows a virtually-infinite number of utterances to be produced and understood from a limited core of grammatical rules. Every speaker routinely produces utterances never before articulated identically in that specific word-sequence, yet immediately understood by people who have never before heard precisely the same sequence of words! Likewise, intercultural community members embody creative and novel – yet comprehensible and acceptable – ways of living, from their common stock of beliefs, convictions or virtues.

We may note that although the rules of chess are few, the moves are limitless, but without knowing the rules, we could watch players for decades and still be unable to play chess.

Without a grasp of underlying rules and rationality, members of intercultural communities will never become as proficient as chess players.

Fourth, culture is analogous to skin. The skin is the human body's largest organ. Grafting it is difficult and sometimes impossible. If it is severely burned, death may be inevitable.

And yet skin can tolerate multiple scars, blemishes, wrinkles and dermatological conditions. We cannot be literally in someone else's skin; and if ours were to be stripped or flayed, we would certainly die. Cultures, like skin, need not be perfect and can tolerate both wear and tear and trauma; but the overall integrity of the skin is as necessary for life as is the overall integrity of a culture and its members.

Fifth, culture is "an enduring social reality." Cultures rise and fall, flourish and die, and none is static or immortal; implications for intercultural living should be obvious. Culture is transmitted gradually over time, through the generations: an ongoing process rather than a simple social fact. Some cultures, (termed "traditional") may appear to be in stasis or equilibrium, but every culture is in process of change, at varied speeds, and always "contested" by its members; and some are more resilient than others.

Reality (what people consider real) is socially constructed:⁷ people are born into a community that has already interpreted the world and determined the meaning of things, events, and relationships. Socialization or enculturation extends through the first decades of life, as a person is aggregated to the pre-existing world of meaning. Once adequately socialized, it is increasingly difficult to think our thoughts or ways are wrong.

With such understanding of culture, the challenge facing old and young alike is to identify and respond to the demands of intercultural living. The broader community must engage with the cultural identity of newer members and abandon the crude assimilation model as broken and unfit for the purpose. Individual members will respond to the challenge by embracing intercultural living wholeheartedly or halfheartedly, or by resisting and waiting for death. Everyone must stand and be counted: the future, viable or not, is at stake.

Identifying Theological Implications

Because every mature person is a person of culture, spirituality (or lived faith) can only flourish in a cultural context. But how do faith and culture coexist? St Jerome coined the word spirituality in the fifth century, defining it explicitly as life in the Holy Spirit given at baptism to guide our faith-journey.⁸ It might be described as "a way of being in the world with God," where every variable (way, being, world, God) is shaped by each individual's experience. During a lifetime a person may embrace a number of possible ways (single, married, widowed, celibate and so on), experience different states of being (from youth to dotage, in sickness and health, safety or peril, as citizen or refugee and so on), live in several different worlds (rural, urban, tropical, arctic, peaceful or warring), and relate in different ways to God (Creator, Wisdom, Lord, Father, King, Warrior, Spirit – or the Jesus of Manger or Golgotha, miracle-worker or faith-healer).

Spirituality is not a set of formulated beliefs, but shapes and is shaped by how we relate to God and creation, pray and express our embodied selves, respond to suffering and well-being, and make life-choices. From different cultural environments and experiences, human beings have generated myriad legitimate expressions of Christian spirituality. People in a multi-cultural community, attempting, not just to live the faith, but to do so in an explicitly intercultural way, will encounter many opportunities and challenges, similarities and differences, with respect to liturgy, prayer, ritual, music, silence, privacy, conformity, and so on. Each person must discover a new *modus vivendi* amid cultural differences, learned behaviors and personal preferences. Some of the most contentious issues and initially unintelligible responses may prove – if approached sympathetically and creatively – to be mutually enriching.

Here are four areas of "contested" culturally shaped topics with particular salience for intercultural community members. Failure to learn from each other and adapt accordingly, can destroy the integrity of a community.

Our social location describes our enduring world and our place in it – from Pacific atoll to forest enclave, from isolated settlement to crowded high-rise, from tight-knit extended family system to free-wheeling independent citizen. Serious thought should be given to the formative power of each person’s social location, and to how much individual variety and preference is compatible with the demands of the broader community and its mission. Understanding others’ social geography, socialization, and social mobility is a prerequisite to appropriate responses. Sadly, some current community members know less about their brethren after decades than they do about movie stars or politicians.

Body tolerance describes the culturally diverse ways people treat and display their bodies and interact with others. It contrasts different people’s comfort levels. But a relaxed and spontaneous (“Dionysian”) attitude no more indicates immodesty than a controlled and disciplined (“Apollonian”) posture indicates modesty; cultural differences in body tolerance cannot be grossly correlated with virtue or vice. But culturally diverse people in an intentional community must become mutually sensitive to what is appropriate dress and demeanor, interaction and affection. The “noble simplicity of the Roman Rite” may be revered, especially in colder climates, yet, people from the tropics may find it ill-suited to appropriate displays of temperament and affect, and constrained by too many rules and rubrics. Compare the image of a day-long open-air liturgical celebration under an African sun, and a hurried 40-minute Sunday Mass with a congregation that neither sings nor emotes -- and the difference between Dionysian exuberance and spontaneity and the clock-governed “Sunday obligation” of Apollonian discipline and control become obvious. In matters of common prayer, liturgy, music or silence, movement and stillness, different comfort-levels and tolerances, will constitute significant points of concern within an intercultural community.

Health and sickness are culturally coded. Many northern people with highly developed health systems rarely see a dead body, and serious sickness is understood to be a matter for hospital isolation for a medical or surgical solution before a rapid return to the community. But in many parts of the world, death and dying are constant visitors, sickness is attended domestically and medical/surgical solutions are rare. Rather than sickness isolating patient from family, it integrates them; and when death nears, family solidarity is critical, whatever the expense or distance involved. But many members of conventional religious communities had to make a real break with their families, had no further involvement with sick or dying relatives, and were prevented by distance, finances or rules from attending funerals or assisting with family needs. Intercultural living demands a radical rethinking of what is appropriate or demanded in justice, relative to each member personally and to their kin.

Finally, attitudes to time and space are so culturally variable that any group of diverse people will need to address them explicitly. We have all heard pejorative references – by people enslaved by clock or watch – to “African time” or “Mexican time”; but clock-watching can also produce hypertension, frustration and intolerance. Think again of those open-ended, timeless Sunday liturgies of African communities, compared to the clock-ruled, time-starved, and rushed liturgies in other areas. In many cultures, time is a gift, to be used freely without reference to chronology, while in others it is a scarce resource, treated as a commodity and with the very same vocabulary as we use for commercial transactions: we say that time can be ‘saved’ or ‘spent,’ ‘gained’ or ‘lost,’ and even ‘wasted’. When daily life is structured by the clock, there is little “time” left over for spontaneity, creativity, or simple availability. Intercultural living calls us to address the use (and abuse) of time. And as with time, so with space: attitudes to space – personal space, open-space, private space, common space, sacred space – are not simply whimsical but culturally shaped. In an intercultural community, space must be carefully negotiated, and not without some discomfort or pain, and certainly requiring compromise.

Clarifying the Challenge

Ethnocentrism is a fact of life: we see and interpret through culturally-conditioned eyes. It is immoral only when we inflict our own perspective on others, imagine it is the only true perspective, or act as if it were actually God's way of seeing the world. We are all ethnocentric, but with maturity and training we can identify this and act accordingly. An ethnocentric bias judges other people and worlds to be inferior reflections of one's own. The "other" then becomes the problem – to be avoided, demeaned, attacked or perhaps converted or assimilated.

Intercultural living challenges our ethnocentrism -- which should gradually erode through our exposure to other ways of living. And since none of us is entirely free, each has work to do. The narrower our shared world of meaning, the more we will distinguish insiders ("us") from outsiders ("them"). The challenge then, is to create a new culture from the constituent cultures of each member, so that there is no longer an us/them opposition. But this lovely thought is undermined in practice by what I call the "cultural flaw" and some theologians call "original sin."

God's idea of a community – from the mythical Genesis story to the historical community of the first disciples, and down to our own day – is one of radical inclusion and radical equality, made explicit by Jesus. But while God wants to unite, every culture is limited by a perverse tendency to stratify, separate, diminish and exclude; no human society is in fact radically inclusive or egalitarian. Every attempt to form an inclusive community of "we" – in Eden or in myriad subsequent Utopian communities – very soon results in alienation or the creation of hierarchy, or drives a wedge between people: an original inclusive community of "WE" thus becomes polarized into "US" and "THEM." It is precisely this situation that Jesus encountered. The Letter to the Ephesians describes humanity's self-inflicted wound and the Jesus solution. The author describes the polarized world of Jews ("us") and Gentiles ("them"), and God's plan to reconcile humanity to itself and to God as an all-inclusive "we."

But now in Christ Jesus, you who were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he is the peace between us, and he has made the two into one and broken down the barrier which used to keep them apart, actually destroying in his own person the hostility between us (Eph 2:13-14).

This is a stunning articulation of Jesus' radical plan for humanity. Pauline writings also declare three times that there is henceforth to be no moral distinction or political division erected on the obvious differences between men and women, Jew and Greek, slave and free (Gal 3:28; Col 3:11; 1Cor 12:13). This is the very vision that must be the foundation and justification for every attempt to build intercultural communities. Jesus chose to become a person of the margins, a sociological and biblical "stranger" rather than a person of power and influence. Influential people occupy central positions where power and authority lie. But Jesus chose the most effective way to encounter the people marginalized by circumstance and by society: outreach to society's "them" or "other" -- whether by gender, ethnicity, religion, lifestyle, or social or moral standing. For him, margins and boundaries were points of engagement rather than marks of separation or discrimination. Since the primary purpose of intercultural communities is greater commitment to the mission of Jesus, every member is called to kenotic living: self-emptying service of, and among, "the least" or "the other." The only effective way of doing this is Jesus' own way, the Way of the Cross, the way of encountering those who live on the margins and walking with them.

Given the strong cultural pressures to achievement, advancement and social recognition, intercultural living stands as a bold invitation to a faith-based countercultural lifestyle. Even if we address ethnocentrism and "downward mobility," much remains to be done. Good will alone is insufficient: it has produced sin and scandal (from Crusades, slavery or burnings, to the

marginalization and abuse of women, to excommunications, and to an odious lack of due process). Some would-be disciples of Jesus have been stumbling blocks rather than honest witnesses; good will must be complemented and shaped by ongoing conversion.

An “intercultural project” is not just a rational game-plan but a faith-driven and lifelong undertaking. Faith may or may not motivate multinational companies or volunteers, but it is the foundation of the life-project of every Christian disciple. Our aspirations reach beyond the reasonable or coldly rational; and in the face of frustration and failure it may be our faith alone that sustains us and others. So, without mature faith-sharing, appropriate correction, reconciliation and mutual encouragement, the project will inevitably founder, as Pope Francis made explicit, excoriating the Curia at Christmas 2014. And we all know the corrosive effects of gossip and slander, or of the basic lack of encouragement from peers and leaders.

And yet: even personal faith is insufficient unless supported by the actual fruit of people’s good intentions: the ongoing commitment to acquiring appropriate skills and virtue. Not that everyone must become super-efficient, but everyone must persevere in the effort. In ministries that require a new language, the most effective are not always the most fluent or brilliant, but those most dedicated to the process of trying to learn a little and never giving up in the face of difficulty. So with learning the art of intercultural living: perseverance may be a better witness than expertise.

The constant challenge is to become virtuous. A virtue is moral good repeated until it becomes a habit (and vice is its opposite). Intercultural living demands a litany of virtues: the virtue of practical respect for personal and cultural differences; commitment to seek truth through dialogue: truth is not a commodity but a goal to be sought with others, and it will change us all. Then, because marginality and “downward mobility” constitute the apostolic strategy of Jesus, his disciples must strive for the same, lest we fail to encounter poor and forgotten people. Again, we are called to cultivate the virtue of being continuous learners – the actual meaning of the word “disciple.” And we must learn from the best of theology and tradition: intercultural living is really as old as Christianity and we have a lot to learn from the past.

Evaluating the Prospects

Since intercultural living is not the mobilization of an international work-force but a faith-based commitment to the vision of Jesus, to “problematize” it is strategically and psychologically impoverished: rather it is an opportunity, a challenge and a grace. Not everyone need be young and active: the moral support of those who are less active is of incalculable value; but a polarized group is self-defeating. But intercultural living is not a “natural” arrangement, though it is possible in a supernatural context.⁹ Diplomacy, compromise, and a common vision must inspire a common effort and provide appropriate means to sustain it. Even for members of established international communities, it is something new: most of us remain rather mono-cultural even in multicultural or international environments. Intercultural living is necessary but costly for viable international religious life, but obligatory if dry bones are to live. If successful, it will revolutionize our lives and the Christian mission. And in some form it challenges all in ministry to any “other,” by whatever criteria. Not everyone will accept the challenge to mission in intercultural communities, though it is open to everyone. And it does require a critical mass of committed supporters, lest the apathetic or resisters compromise its realization.

As membership of international institutes continues to decline and age in the northern hemisphere, communities that do survive with integrity in the coming decades will do so through their international, culturally diverse, membership.

They will be characterized by “fusion” or the integration of culturally diverse personnel. The

opposite of fusion is “fission”: the fragmentation of international congregations so that they become no more than loose aggregations of culturally discrete groups. Thus they would remain international entities, but at the cost of their intercultural witness to the gospel. This happens through individualism, tribalism, factionalism, or the loss of the founding charism. The future of international religious life – and collaborative ministries -- depends significantly on the ability of each community (local and institutional) to think and act interculturally. Failure to do so in a global church will lead to terminal decline.

Conclusion: From Invitation to Radical Welcome

Intercultural living is a much more persuasive force than cheap rhetoric about loving one’s neighbor. But new wine cannot be put into old wineskins, and we cannot build such communities by recycling old material or uncritically employing obsolete ideas. The classical model for community-building was assimilation: new members were welcomed into a pre-existing and largely monocultural community with its established rules and expectations, standardized dress, food and forms of prayer. Those able to adjust accordingly might be admitted; others would soon leave; there were always plenty of aspirants. The unspoken message was “come join us and share our ways and religious tradition.” This cost the existing community very little; life could go on while potential newcomers were being formed, assessed, and then accepted or not. Potential incomers different from the norm were either marginalized or rejected by a community administration that held the initiative in all matters.

Since Vatican II and the increase of religious from the global church, this model has given way to a more inclusive approach by some long-established communities. Now the message is clearer: “come join our community and help us diversify internally and internationally.” This is a significant advance, indicating a desire not only to speak and teach but to listen and learn. But inclusion of “the other” simply does not go far enough. Unless customary behavior is changed, a marginal outsider merely becomes a marginal insider. Many cultural “others” still feel ineffective and invisible in their own communities. Without a careful power-analysis and self- analysis of the established community there will be no radical inclusion. Such analysis would show whether the traditional decision-makers and privileged personnel have remained as before, or whether incoming members are treated as equals. So intercultural communities must reject both “assimilation” and token “inclusion,” and develop an attitude of “radical welcome.” Then the message is “bring your cultural and religious values, your voice and autonomous self, and help us together to build a new community.” This facilitates the authentic incarnation of each member, which means that everyone will be affected by the cultural diversity, and called to an ongoing conversion to God, to each other, and to the cultural values which shape each life. Not that people will be able to hide behind their own cultural conventions, or play the “culture card.” Rather, each will need to examine cultural habits, bad and good, and learn to compromise some comfort for the sake of the “new” community. The cost will be spread vertically and laterally and not only borne by new or incoming members. But an authentic faith-based undertaking will survive.

Three principles might help us move forward. First, we are called to build a home: a home away from home it will be, since “we have here no abiding city,” but not a proliferation of mere “houses” where different individuals subsist under the same roof, that is, “living together separately,” not intercultural living. Second, integrated communities evolve gradually, organically, and not without pain. Therefore we must truly value difference, because God created difference and saw that it was good. The “cultural flaw” uses difference to justify discrimination and disrespect. That is sinful. And third, we must rethink the way we think. Rudy Wiebe says, “you repent, not by feeling bad but by thinking [and acting] differently.” This is the cost of conversion, and it is much more difficult to think differently than to feel bad and do nothing. In a classical rabbinic story, the teacher asks the disciples: “When do you know it is dawn?” One says, ‘when you can distinguish a white thread from

a black one.” “No,” says the teacher. “When you can see the outline of a tree against the horizon,” ventures another. “No,” says the teacher -- to this and all other efforts to answer the question. Finally he says, “when you can look into the eyes of an “other,” a stranger, and see a brother or a sister, then it is dawn. Until then, it is still night.”

May we have the grace and good sense to look for, and to live in, the light of a new dawn!

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Endnotes

1. There is significant literature on the sociology and theology of the stranger. See Gittins, *A Presence That Disturbs: A Call to Radical Discipleship*. Liguori, 2002:143-162, and *Ministry at The Margins: Spirituality and Strategy for Mission*. Orbis, 2002:121-160.
2. Gittins, *Presence*, 96-107.
3. Gittins, *Ministry*, 135-41.
4. See Gittins, *Ministry*, 121-60.
5. Intercultural living constitutes a challenge and opportunity for many other people working and ministering among people of several or many languages and cultures. Though by no means all of these people can, or will learn the skills and virtues mentioned here, dedicated ministers will resonate with many aspects of intercultural living, and may find much insight into how to respond to the challenges they face.
6. These descriptive components are gleaned from many sources. “Culture” is a topic that has generated a vast amount of easily accessible literature. I offer a simplified but multi-faceted description.
7. We only need to consider the reality of witchcraft, Eucharistic Presence, Heaven, Resurrection, Metempsychosis or ghosts to take the point here: one person’s reality may be another’s fantasy.
8. Jerome is credited with coining the word *spiritualitas*.
9. [Jesus said] “For you it is impossible, but not for God. Everything is possible for God.” Mark 10:27.

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Possible activity

1. A Survey of the congregation²

Participants could divide into groups of 5 or 6. Half of the groups could start with A and then consider C while the other half begins with B and then moves on to C.

- (a) All participants reflect and write answers to the questions in A or B for 15 minutes.
- (b) Participants use the Mutual Invitation Process to share their insights in groups. The recorder could summarize the group’s answer to each question. (30 minutes)
- (c) All participants then reflect and jot answers to the questions in C for 15 minutes.
- (d) Participants use the Mutual Invitation Process to share their insights in groups. The recorder summarizes the group’s answer to each question. (30 minutes)
- (e) The recorders read their reports at a plenary session. (10 minutes)
- (f) A plenary discussion is held on the following questions:
 - What have I learned from this survey?
 - On the basis of these learnings what further dialogue is needed for action to be taken to improve the life of the community?

(20 minutes)

A. Material Aspects:

Do an imaginary walk around the local central house and/or formation house and write your observations:

1. What does the architecture of the building and grounds convey?
 - How does it compare with buildings nearby?
2. What do the location and design of the various rooms say about life as lived in the house?
 - What do the furnishings, interior décor and artwork convey?
3. Where do people meet and chat with each other?
 - Where do people find their own space?
 - What does the spatial layout say about community life?
4. What are the staple food items? What style of cooking is usual?
 - Are there any explicit or implicit norms about eating, seating at table, time?
5. In what ways are other religious congregations or communities in the area different in house design, furnishings, space and food?

B. Practices in the house.

1. Are there any group or community practices on a daily basis in the houses?
2. Are there any group or communal recreations?
3. What community prayer is practiced?
4. Is there an unspoken code of behavior? If so, what are its main tenets?
5. What are the explicit or implicit norms about guests (relatives and others) and hospitality in the house?
6. What feast days/occasions are celebrated?
 - How are these celebrated?
 - What alternative type celebrations could there be?
7. Do the structures of governance of the congregation reflect cultural influences?
 - Cultural influences on gatherings that occur regularly, annually etc?
 - How is authority and membership exercised?
 - Role of the Director/Coordinator, district superior (or LM coordinator)?
 - What are the decision-making processes?
 - How do things actually get done?
8. What cultural influences are seen in the formation process in the following?
 - What were/are the main rules in your spiritual year, formation program, orientation program?
 - What was/is the relationship between formator or spiritual year director/student ?
 - What spiritual practices introduced in formation have most influence on your life?
 - What other spiritual practices are important in your life now?
 - Procedures to deal with attitudes or behaviors that might be harmful to individuals and/or the community?

C. Ideas and Values:

1. What are the main influences of the founders on your group?
2. What are the values and influences on the congregation of your patron?
3. What values and assumptions underlie the main material aspects and practices e.g. community prayer, celebrations, food, hospitality?

What values and assumptions underlie the main community practices?

What values and assumptions underpin the formation processes, decision making, leadership,

4. What are the values emphasized in the history of the congregation e.g. Who are our martyrs, heroes, models, prophets, writers?
 - What influence have they on the group?
5. What are the most influential writings, hymns and myths, symbols in your tradition?
 - What sort of ethos have they promoted in the group?

² Exercises 1 – 4 in this section are adapted from the Cultural Audit

For Reflection

Three principles might help us move forward. First, we are called to build a home: a home away from home it will be, since “we have here no abiding city,” but not a proliferation of mere “houses” where different individuals subsist under the same roof, that is, “living together separately,” not intercultural living.

Second, integrated communities evolve gradually, organically, and not without pain. Therefore we must truly value difference, because God created difference and saw that it was good. The “cultural flaw” uses difference to justify discrimination and disrespect. That is sinful.

And third, we must rethink the way we think. Rudy Wiebe says, “you repent, not by feeling bad but by thinking [and acting] differently.” This is the cost of conversion, and it is much more difficult to think differently than to feel bad and do nothing.

Anthony Gittens

7 Interculturality and Communication

Video

<http://www.internationalunionsuperiorsgeneral.org/interculturality-communication-challenge-religious-life/>

Diana de Vallescar P., PhD Audio only (10 mins)

Scripture Passage

Acts 2:1-4

Reading

Cross-Cultural Competence: Engage People from any Culture

by [Louise Rasmussen](#) updated September 15, 2021

Cross-cultural competence refers to your ability to understand people from different cultures and engage with them effectively. And not just people from the one culture that you've studied for years. Having cross-cultural competence means you can be effective in your interactions with people from most any culture.

Being able to communicate and work with people across cultures is becoming more important all the time. People are traveling, reaching out, and mixing with different others like never before. They do it for fun, but they also do it for work. In all cases, success requires developing a relationship. And doing this means bridging a cultural divide.

Cross-cultural competence helps you develop the mutual understanding and human relationships that are necessary for achieving your professional goals.

But what exactly makes up cross-cultural competence? What are the specific knowledge, skills, and attitudes that make someone cross-culturally competent?

Louise Rasmussen and Winston Sieck conducted a study to address these questions. They described their model of cross-cultural competence in an article published in the *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*. Rasmussen was also granted an award from the Defense Language and National Security Education Office to further study and validate the model, which describes 12 elements of cross-cultural competence.

Rasmussen and her team interviewed cross-cultural experts about their experiences interacting in foreign cultures. These experts were military personnel who had a great deal of cross-cultural experience. They were also nominated by their peers as being especially effective in their interactions with members of other cultures.

The researchers did not ask about the opinions of the cross-cultural experts. Instead, they used cognitive task analysis in which they asked questions to get at the interviewees' actual, lived overseas experiences. From these experiences, Rasmussen and her team uncovered the skills and knowledge the experts drew on as they interacted with people from other cultures.

Rasmussen, Sieck, and their colleagues identified 12 core aspects of cross-cultural competence. These competencies were frequently found in the thought process of the experts. They are listed here as a set of principles that can help you be more effective on your next sojourn:

1. **Stay focused on your goals:** If you're overseas for work, then building intercultural relationships is not just for fun. Building relationships will help you get your work done.
2. **Understand the culture within yourself:** Keep aware of the fact that you see the world in a particular way because of your own background, personal history, and culture.
3. **Manage your attitudes towards the culture:** You don't always have to love the culture. But you do have to keep check on your reactions to values and customs that are different from your own. The first two principles can also help you manage your attitudes.
4. **Direct your learning of the culture:** Don't expect a book or training course to hand you the answers. Try to make sense of the culture for yourself, using the information you come across as clues.
5. **Develop reliable information sources:** Find two or three locals to get answers from about the culture. Build the relationships so you feel comfortable asking about most anything. Check with more than one and compare their answers in your head.
6. **Learn about the new culture efficiently:** You can't learn everything about the culture before your trip. It's unrealistic. Focus on learning a few things that fit your interests, and use those to make connections and learn more while you are abroad.
7. **Cope with cultural surprises:** No matter how much you prepare in advance, you will find yourself faced with people acting in ways that you find puzzling. When you do, try to find out why. Doing so will often lead to new insights.
8. **Formulate cultural explanations of behavior:** Routinely try to explain to yourself why people act as they do in this culture, differently from your own. Using things you know about the culture to explain behavior will help you build a deeper understanding of the culture overall.
9. **Take a cultural perspective:** Try to see things from the point of view of the people from the other culture. By taking a cultural perspective, you may create a whole new understanding of what's going on around you.
10. **Plan cross-cultural communication:** Think ahead of time about what you have to say and how you want the other person to perceive you. Use what you know about the culture to figure out the best way to get that across.
11. **Control how you present yourself:** Be deliberate about how you present and express yourself. Sometimes you'll be most effective if you're just yourself. Other times you have to adapt how you present yourself to the culture you are in to be most effective.

12. Reflect and seek feedback: Continue to reflect on and learn from your interactions and experiences after they occur. After an interaction you can think about whether you got the messages across you intended. You can even ask a local how they think you did.

These twelve principles give you some pointers about *how* to think about the experiences you have in new cultures. They are essential to cross-cultural competence.

Reading through the principles you may be asking yourself *“do I really need to do this much thinking when I go abroad?”*

Rasmussen consistently found this thoughtful approach among those with high cross-cultural competence. Keep these principles in mind and use them. You will be more capable and confident engaging people from any culture.

References

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Possible activity

Language	Original	Literal translation	What does it mean?
	Morgenstund hat Gold im Mund.	The morning hour has gold in its mouth.	
	Coûter les yeux de la tête.	To cost the eyes of the head.	
	Tomar el pelo.	To grab someone's hair.	
	のひらを返す (Te no hira wo kaesu).	To turn over the palm of your hand.	
	Skägget i brevlådan.	Caught with your beard in a mailbox.	
	At-Tikraar yu'Allem al-Himaar	Repetition teaches the donkey.	
	Jedním uchem tam, druhým ven.	Like water on a duck's back.	
	Gooreto gom kon!	Go lose your grave!	
	Lyja kirviais.	It's raining axes.	
	Over koetjes en kalfjes praten.	To talk about little cows and little calves.	
	Mieć muchy w nosie.	To have flies up one's nose.	
	Ogni morte di papa.	Every death of a pope.	
	抛砖引玉 (pāo zhuān yǐn yù).	To cast a brick to attract jade.	
	Det är ingen ko på isen	"There's no cow on the ice"	
	Sof ha'olam, smolah	"At the end of the world, turn left"	
	ชาติหน้า ตอนบ่ายๆ Bāy wān hīnùng nī kār̄k lāp chāti mā keid khxng khun	Afternoon in your next reincarnation."	
	당근이지! (dang-geun i-ji)	"It's a carrot"	
	Pagar o pato	"Pay the duck."	
	Finns det hjärterum så finns det stjärterum.	is room in the heart, there is room for the butt.	
	Nie mój cyrk, nie moje małpy	Not my circus, not my monkeys	

Quote for Reflection

“Keep your language. Love its sounds, its modulation, its rhythm.
But try to march together with people of different languages,
remote from your own, who wish like you for a more just and human world.”
Hélder Câmara.

8 Intercultural Ministry

Video

<https://vimeo.com/465246589/23ec3dde61>

Scripture Passage

Lk 9:1-6 Sending the 12

Reading

Engaging our Diversity through Interculturality

by Roger Schroeder

While the social sciences and business world have been using the term “interculturality” for some time, its appearance in theological and ministerial studies is more recent. Let us begin with several definitions.

Internationality and multiculturalism refer to the fact that persons or groups of different nationalities and/or ethnic groups simply coexist, perhaps with little or no interaction. The minimum expectation is tolerance. Cross-cultural relationships point to a one-way movement from one worldview to another. As sincere as this may be, its goal is assimilation or accommodation. In contrast, interculturality implies a mutually enriching and challenging two-way exchange among different cultures. Theologically speaking, this is an image of the Reign of God. Sociologist-theologian Robert Kisala describes the meaning of interculturality as moving far beyond mere coexistence “to emphasize and make more explicit the essential *mutuality* of the process of cultural interaction on both the personal and social level.”¹ As a final definition, the term “culture” is used here in a post-modern understanding to include social location (generation, gender, economic class, etc.), social change, ethnicity/race/nationality, and particular individual and communal situations.² It is not limited to ethnicity.

The term “intercultural” appeared in some theological and missiological documents and programs in the 1980s, but the more systemized development of the understanding of the term began around the turn of the century in the writing of theologians like Robert Schreiter³ and Franz Xaver Scheuerer.⁴ The Center for the Study of Religious Life, which was located at Catholic Theological Union (CTU) in Chicago, published a set of materials in 2001/2002 to assist religious congregations through a “Cultural Audit” to move beyond multiculturalism.⁵ It should be noted that Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger (later Pope Benedict XVI) in the 1990s had introduced the term of interculturality in opposition to inculturation. His use of the term was based on an idealistic perspective of abstract anthropology which avoided interaction with concrete cultural realities.⁶ This is not how interculturality is being understood in this article or, generally speaking, in the Catholic Church today.

Theologians, missiologists, and practitioners in the areas of interculturality benefit greatly from the excellent work of social scientists like Milton Bennett, Mitchell Hammer, Geert Hofstede, Eric Law, and Edward Hall. Bennett developed a model for “intercultural competency”⁷ which was later refined by his former colleague Hammer.⁸ They identified six stages of moving from ethnocentrism to ethnorelativism, or what I would call interculturality: denial, defense, minimization, acceptance, adaptation, and integration. Ethnocentrism is the all-too-human tendency to use one’s own culture (in the broad post-modern sense) as the normative measuring tool for perceiving, judging, and treating others. Hofstede developed four dimensions of cultural differences: power distance, individualism and collectivism, uncertainty avoidance, and femininity and masculinity.⁹ The

aspect of power distance has been further nuanced by Chinese American Law.¹⁰ Hall identified high- and low-context communication styles, which can be identified with Hofstede's collectivism (socio-centric) and individualism (individual-centric) categories for societies that give priority to the needs of the group in the former, and those of the individual in the latter.¹¹ The works of social scientists are very important resources to help church personnel to understand, appreciate, and engage cultural differences.

From the church perspective, two very significant works on interculturality were published in 2015. *Living Mission Interculturally* by Anthony Gittins¹² is an excellent resource for leaders and members of religious congregations and all practitioners of church ministry. Gittins draws upon his anthropological training and years of preparing women and men for Christian ministry. It is hoped that this book will soon be translated into Spanish. Lazar Stanislaus and Martin Ueffing co-edited a two-volume work on intercultural living and mission,¹³ with contributions from a wide spectrum of international, ecumenical, and professional perspectives. A single volume of selected articles from this work was published in Spanish,¹⁴ and Orbis Books will be publishing a similar volume in English in 2018.

Theologically, interculturality is grounded in the Trinity and the *missio Dei* ("mission of God"), which was foundational for the Second Vatican Council. The second paragraph of the conciliar document *Ad Gentes* (AG) offers the powerful image of God the Father as a life-giving fountain of love watering the world and calling all peoples back to the fullness of God's life. Furthermore, the Spirit continues stirring in creation and history, and "Jesus Christ, as God incarnate and the 'face' of the Spirit, called the disciples and the Church to continue his mission."¹⁵ Since cultures are graced by God's life, the church is to acknowledge those "seeds" of the Word (AG 11, 22) and "a sort of secret presence of God" (AG 9) in every culture. All cultures also contain "weeds" which are contrary to God's reign. Therefore, interculturality must recognize the presence of both the "seeds" and the "weeds" in every culture or context. In this way, interculturality is to be mutually enriching and challenging as all God's people journey together back to God. The movement toward interculturality has been described recently as a theology, practice, and spirituality of prophetic dialogue—both dialoguing with God's presence in all cultures and taking a prophetic stance against any elements that are contrary to God's reign and/or failures to acknowledge God's presence in that culture.¹⁶

Along with the theology of interculturality itself, much has been done in intercultural theology, particularly in Europe. In his excellent extended review essay of *Intercultural Hermeneutics*,¹⁷ the English translation of the first of three volumes by Henning Wrogemann, Terry Muck states that the author identifies the two major challenges facing the church as "coming to grips with its global diversity and ... doing something about the misunderstanding that often results from that diversity."¹⁸ Wrogemann advocates for a means of "developing a hermeneutic, a way of understanding, that facilitates conversations among the various sectors of the church."¹⁹ While a fuller treatment of this major endeavor in intercultural theology by many authors is not possible here, it is important to note how interculturality is also impacting the content and methodology of doing theology itself.

Interculturality also implies practice. The Committee on Cultural Diversity of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) in 2011 approved five guidelines for intercultural competence in ministry. A number of resources, training programs, and courses are now available to address varied pastoral challenges and opportunities related to cultural diversity, multicultural or "shared" parishes, and Catholic educational institutions.²⁰ Patricia Wittberg widens the parameters by addressing the perspectives of not only ethnic cultures but also generational cultures in the US Catholic Church.²¹ The growing initiatives of the past ten years to address the phenomena of short-term mission experiences, parish "twinning," and non-US-born priests and religious serving in the United States should continue to draw upon the theology and practices related to interculturality.²² Many religious congregations are now more intentionally attending to issues of interculturality both domestically and internationally in a variety of programs.²³ Other concrete issues related to interculturality include reconciliation,²⁴ conflict resolution,²⁵ bullying, racism, inter-gender and inter-generation relations, personality and culture, intercultural communication,²⁶ immigrant/refugee situations, and

the use of social media and the arts.

Finally, the theology, theory, and practice of interculturality must be accompanied with an appropriate spirituality. Theological and sociological knowledge regarding diversity would alone not lead to a change in interactions and attitudes among people of different backgrounds. Christian individuals, parishes, institutions, religious congregations, dioceses, and the church in general need to respond to an ongoing process of conversion from all forms of ethnocentrism, racism, and prejudices against those considered different or marginalized.²⁷ There is a strong biblical foundation for interculturality. Jesus Christ was the “Word...made flesh” (Jn 1:14) in a particular culture and context. However, he witnessed to the inclusive Reign of God by his practice of sharing food with those Jews considered impure and marginalized according to a strict interpretation of Jewish table fellowship of some of his contemporaries (Lk 5:29-30; 7:36-38; 19:5-6). Furthermore, there were three major turning points or “events” for Jesus in relation to the Gentiles: a transformative encounter with the Canaanite woman (Mt 15:21-28; Mk 7:24-37), opening new spaces for dialogue with the Samaritan woman at the well (Jn 4:1-30), and his reference to a Samaritan as the ideal disciple (Lk 10:25-37). Later, the intercultural journey of the disciples of Jesus can be traced through the Acts of the Apostles,²⁸ particularly in the “intercultural conversion” of Peter around his encounter with Cornelius (Acts 10:9-35, 44-48) and the communal/ecclesial “intercultural conversion” at the Council of Jerusalem (Acts 15:5-21). The church needs to undergo such ongoing “conversions” in its encounter with new cultures and contexts today.

This relatively new theological and intentional pastoral focus on interculturality has been developing in many exciting and challenging ways—theologically, missiologically, ministerially, practically, and spiritually. Fostering mutually enriching relationships across our differences is an urgent need in our society and church today, and it is a profound counter-cultural prophetic expression of God’s Reign.

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- 20 See <http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/cultural-diversity/index.cfm>
- 21 Patricia Wittberg, SC, *Catholic Cultures: How Parishes Can Respond to the Changing Face of Catholicism* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2016).
- 22 For a further reference to the developments in the past ten years in these areas, see Roger Schroeder, *What*

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Catholics, rev. and exp. ed. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, forthcoming in 2018), chapter 8 and appendix 3.

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Possible activity

Albatross

Overview

The purpose of this session is to help participants to learn by observation, to infer correct behavior from non-verbal or indirect clues, and to teach self-awareness. Participants learn self-awareness when they are given the chance to assess their own reactions to, and feelings about, the rituals that the Albatrossian couple perform.

First presented by Donald Batchelder and Elisabeth Warner (*Beyond Experience: the experimental approach to cross-cultural education*, Experiment Press, 1979).

There are two parts to this session:

The exercise of performing a ceremonial greeting between members of an imaginary culture (the Albatrossians/facilitators) and foreigners (the participants). There should be no on-lookers.

AND

Group discussion of what participants saw and experienced.

Duration 90 minutes

Group Size 12-15 participants (preferably with an equal representation of males and females)

Minimum Staffing 2 facilitators

Materials Needed: A dish or a bowl for hand washing; a cup with liquid for drinking Food to eat (preferably food that is easy to grab and feed to others) Sheets for the “Albatrossian” people to wear, enough chairs for half of the participants

Preparation: Read through all of the material and make sure you are comfortable discussing it; make notecards or highlight suggested questions to ask participants in group discussions.

This session requires two facilitators to act out the part of the Albatrossian couple. You will need a male facilitator and a female facilitator. If this is not possible, they will need to be differentiated from each other in some other way.

The facilitators should read through the exercise and be very comfortable with the cultural rituals and cultural communication that they will be acting out.

Have the room prepared with enough chairs in a circle for half of the participants to sit in; with one chair placed in the middle of the circle for the Albatrossian male.

Fill the bowl with water; set aside.

Fill the cup with a liquid to drink; set aside.

Culture:

Participants will:

1. Understand the concept of culture in terms of objects, behaviors & values
2. Be aware of the influence of culture on people
3. Understand in which aspects cultures may differ (communication patterns, personal distance, individualism vs. collectivism, etc.)
4. Be aware that understanding cultural characteristics requires knowledge of the cultural context (e.g. History, values, safety issues, religion etc.)

SET UP INSTRUCTIONS FOR FACILITATORS

Allow 15 minutes to set up room before session starts. Close all doors/windows so participants can't view preparations. Put a large circle of chairs with only enough chairs for the males of the group plus the male Albatrossian. Male Albatrossian should be wearing robes/toga and shoes. Female Albatrossian only robes/toga. She should be barefoot. Prepare a tray of Dixie cups with an interesting tasting beverage. Have a bowl of interesting tasting snacks. Ideally have some foreign/strange flute music quietly playing in the background. Small LED votive candles create a nice ambience also. Once the student group enters the room, all communication from the Albatrossians is in their language or gestures.

ACTIVITY: Albatross

Part 1: Seating of the Albatross Couples and Guests

- Albatrossian couple enters the room, the Albatrossian sits on the male chair, the Albatross woman kneels on the floor to his right. They "speak" to each other in their language, which consists of hisses, indicating disapproval; hums, indicating approval, and clicking sounds for transmission of other messages.
- Class enters room. "Participant-observers" are selected, males sit on remaining chairs, females [only] are asked to remove their shoes and are seated on the floor by each male. Faculty person or coordinator helps seat participants.

Part 2: Greeting Ritual

After each part, the Albatross woman returns to her seat by the male, they "speak" briefly. After a short pause, the Albatross male carefully and gently tilts her head towards the earth in a kind of "bow".

- Gender-specific greetings. First, the Albatross male gets up and greets each male in turn. In the generic greeting the Albatross male holds each guest by the shoulder or waist and rubs his right leg against the leg of the guest, sometimes turning in a circle. Then the guest reseats himself in his chair. After all males are greeted, the Albatross woman greets each female guest individually. She asks the guest to stand, she then kneels, runs both hands down the lower legs and feet gently, ceremoniously. The participant then returns to a seated position on the floor. Actors interpret and elaborate these generic greetings, often in very creative ways.

- Washing the Hands. The Albatross woman circulates a bowl of water to males, beginning with the Albatross male. Each male dips his right hand into the bowl and then shakes off the water. Only males participate. Then the Albatross woman returns to kneel by the Albatross male.
- Serving the Food. On a clicking cue from the Albatross male, the female rises, obtains the food, and offers it to each male, beginning with the Albatross male. Then, each female guest is given food. She does not eat herself.
- Serving the Drinks. Once again, the Albatross female gets the drinks, and serves them first to the males, beginning with the Albatross male, and then to the females. She does not drink herself.
- Selection of Ms. Big Feet. The Albatross couple examines the feet of each female and, unknown to guests, selects the female with the biggest feet. She is led to the male Albatross chair and is told to kneel at his side, like the Albatross woman. He “bows” her head and then that of the female “guest”.
- Gender-specific greetings. The same initial greeting is repeated, first for males, then for females.

Part 3: Albatross Couple Leaves with Ms. Big Feet.

The Albatross couple instruct the selected female guest to leave the room with them.

ACTIVITY 2: Discussion (20 minutes)

After the greeting has been performed, “guests” – i.e. class members – are asked to describe what they have just seen, to identify recurring themes and the portions of the ritual which illustrate these themes. Predictably, participants are convinced they are observing a male dominated society and provide descriptions replete with inferences and culturally-specific interpretations of behaviors which support these presumed cultural themes.

Now the activity is over and the leaders ask the participants to resume their seats (now back in the language we are used to) and evaluate the game by asking questions like

- What did you observe?
- Did you notice anything in particular?
- What happened?
- How did the men feel?
- How did the women experience their roles?

Now the meanings of the actions are explained:

- In the Albatross culture the ground is considered holy.
- In the social hierarchy the women rank above men, therefore only women are allowed to touch the holy ground barefoot.
- The women are considered holy, too.

- The men must not touch what comes from the ground, therefore the women feed the men, whereas the women may touch the food and the water.
- The woman was chosen by the size of her foot, and the honor to kneel beside the leader was given to her as the woman with the largest feet because she has the biggest area of contact with the holy ground.
- The bending of the heads was a sign of gratitude - in this way the men can come closer to the holy ground (by touching the women!).
- Why did most of you immediately assume that the women were being discriminated against? (this is often the case – women feel obliged to work in the course of the game)
- Pointing out hierarchies: - in Europe up = good; in Albatross down = good
- Do you believe that in a foreign country/culture you would feel like you felt in this game?
- How can we try to find out what the underlying reasons for behavior are if we are not sure of interpreting the behavior correctly?

How did it make you feel? What was your reaction?

- Help participants see that their own reaction is very relative: that next to them is sitting someone with quite a contrary reaction.
- Let any and all reactions be express, yet develop the awareness in each participants that s/he is essentially responsible for what “happened.”
- Inevitably the comments arise that “If the experience were done differently” ...The facilitator must make it clear that the Albatross exercises was artificial insofar as it was a simulation. It was not “artificial” in the aspect which matters most: that during a given period of time, a group of people did such and such in that room and that each participants had a real reaction.
- Have participants first describe the ritual, allowing them to give their interpretations of what they observed—both general cultural themes and specific parts of the ritual. You may prefer participants to write, either as an exercise or to help them organize their ideas. You may ask them to share their impressions with their “neighbor”. Or, you can immediately elicit descriptions from the group as a whole.

Info for Facilitator

Aim toward creating the awareness that the “Why’s” of human behavior do not usually lend themselves to simple, neat (sociological/anthropological) concepts and answers.

WRAP UP: Discussion (20 minutes)

Major Points which come out of the discussion: How our observations are colored by our own cultural assumptions; how well we observe even to begin with (do we really notice details, or pay close attention?); that we can, in fact, infer a lot of useful information and learn what is expected of us without being told in so many words; that things doesn't always mean what they seem.

- ✓ Many, if not most, of the observations offered by participants will be highly value- laden. Often one student eventually points out this critical point, but it is important that the facilitator insures that the whole class hears the idea and digests it.
- ✓ Conclusion: (brief recap of information) –you don't need a lot of detail here. You can simply say how you're going to recap (ex: discussion, quiz, pop questions, etc.)

For Reflection

Did you grow up in a bubble as well? If so, what have you done to escape it? What actions are you taking to ensure that each day brings you new experiences, new insight, and new ways to think about your previous assumptions?

Diversity is all around us; we need to make a consistent effort to engage with it. Doing so opens us up to new opportunities, new insights, and new levels of empathy and understanding. You don't need to live a jet-set lifestyle to experience diversity and all it has to offer. You need to get outside, step out of your comfort zone, and embrace the challenges and strangeness of the world around you.

From: <https://www.thindifference.com/2019/01/a-daily-endeavor-finding-and-engaging-diversity/>

9 Interculturality and Indigenous Spirituality

Video

<https://vimeo.com/480561097/3f10fd785d>

Scripture Passage

1 Cor 12:12-14

Reading

Intercultural Theology and the Mission of the Church

Frans Wijsen

In its recent Assessment of Research Quality the Association of the Universities in the Netherlands noted the danger of 'an overly introspective Eurocentrism' in doing theology in the Netherlands and called for more 'involvement with extra-European issues'. (1) Some years earlier I made an investigation of missiological education in the Dutch faculties of theology. This investigation confirmed the diagnosis of Eurocentrism, except for some evangelical schools of theology which have a missionary and cross cultural set-up. (2) Since September 2000 the Faculty of Theology of the Catholic University of Nijmegen has started an English programme in intercultural theology in which students from Asia, Africa and Eastern Europe are enrolled. (3) But, to what extent do we escape from the 'danger of Eurocentrism'? Is our programme really intercultural? Or is it just another example of Western 'knowledge export', a one-way traffic, a manifestation of a Western superiority complex in which we presuppose that our rationality is the best, that our methods are the most appropriate? Are we prepared to learn from 'the others', or do we want them to adjust to our criteria? Do we accept the plurality of scientific perspectives, or has the claim of absoluteness and universality of the Christian faith just been replaced by the claim of absoluteness and universality of a western rational-analytic view of science?

The Nijmegen Graduate School of Theology has been opened as part of the 'mutual missionary assistance of churches'. But the question is: How mutual is this mutual assistance? To what extent are we open to a 'reversed mission' by which members of churches in the South help us to overcome the crisis of Christianity in the West? This contribution will have four sections. First I wish to elaborate on the paradigm shift in mission. Then I will introduce intercultural theology as new perspective and a new method in theology. I will continue by showing the need of developing an intercultural hermeneutics. Finally I will show a direction in which we could go, namely subaltern hermeneutics. In the conclusion I will discern the consequences of a new understanding of culture for the mission of the church in the 21st century.

1. *Paradigm shift in mission*

In the course of its history, the Catholic Church developed various models of mission. I will not go into details, as I presuppose that this history is known. (4) I just mention four models briefly:

1. The first missionaries in the modern time went to the non-Christian countries to bring to the so called 'pagans' the light of Christ and His message of salvation. According to them the pagans lived in the shadow of death. They were convinced that outside the church there was no salvation.

2. Soon missionaries came to understand that individuals need some social support for their conversion. So, the 'salvation of souls' approach was soon supplemented by the 'plantation of the church'. In practice this meant the transplantation of the European Christianity to the mission countries.

3. But, already before the Second World War it became obvious that this mission method was

not very effective. In consequence another approach developed. The aim remained more or less the same, but the method changed. Still the missionaries wanted non-Christians to enter the church. But the church from her side could meet the pagans halfway, by an 'adaptation of Christianity' in its externals, language, vestments and rituals .

4. Whereas the 'adaptation' approach was still very strong in the sixties, and has become stronger again due to the rise of the pentecostal and charismatic movements, some missionaries and local priests worked out a new understanding of mission. It was recognized that Christ was already present in the non-Christian cultures. The missionary's task was only to help the non-Christians to discover the active presence of Christ in their lives.

When mission was defined in terms of a 'deeper adaptation' or 'incarnation', and later on of 'inculturation', this was a break-through in the understanding of mission.(5) It meant a recognition of other cultures in their own right. 'Inculturation' as an expression was taken up in Africa with eagerness. It included dialogue with people of other faiths (as was stressed in Asia) and liberation of all forms of oppression (as was emphasised in Latin America). (6)But the question is: Inculturation in what culture? Due to modernization and globalization most societies in the world are not multi-cultural in the sense of a patchwork quilt or mosaic of separate pieces with hard, well-defined edges, but of a cultural mix or cocktail, for which Ulf Hannerz uses creole languages as a root metaphor.(7) Cities like Amsterdam, Paris or London, but also Jakarta or Nairobi, create youth cultures that area mix of Hindu, Sikh and Muslim traditions, combined with secular-political and ethnic ideals, bound together particularly by reggae or rap music.

It is well known that advocates and critics of globalization theories differ in their opinion about the cultural consequences of globalization. Whereas some scholars speak of cultural homogenization, e.g. Ritzer's 'McDonaldization thesis', others foresee a cultural differentiation and fragmentation, as is the case in Huntington's 'Clash of civilizations'. 'Jihad' versus 'McWorld', to use the title of Barber's book. (8) Some scholars even question whether cultures exist, as is the case in Hobsbawm and Ranger's 'Invention of Tradition'. (9) There is a plurality of overlapping cultural orientations, in such a way that each person is always involved in a multiplicity of such orientations at the same time, while none of these orientations coincide with only one society or one territory, says Wim van Binsbergen. (10) He shows that the classic understanding of culture as discrete, bounded units which are closed into themselves and which produce a total field of life, still has a wide circulation outside anthropology, notably in philosophy of culture and theology. Some twenty years ago Joseph Blomjous, the Dutch White Father bishop of Mwanza, Tanzania, and important spokesman at the Second Vatican Council in his well-known fore-sight proposed that, instead of 'inculturation', missionaries should speak about 'intercultural', (11) a term that did not find its way into the missiological debate, but which I find most appropriate for today's discussion.(12)

Intercultural expresses the idea that the process of inculturation is not simply the interaction between gospel on the one hand and culture on the other, as if they represent two monolithic meaning systems, but between multiple cultural orientations.

2. *Intercultural theology*

Intercultural theology is the theological reflection upon the process of intercultural.

Intercultural theology is not a new theological discipline, but a new perspective and a new method in theology. There are three developments that lead to this new perspective: (13)

First: At the beginning of the twentieth century two thirds of all Christians lived in Europe and North America. At the beginning of the twenty-first century two thirds of all Christians live in the southern part of the world, where new models of church and local theologies emerge. (14) Theologians in Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Pacific have started to question the presumption of European

theology to be a universal theology. Theologies, European theology as well, are always contextual. Now that most mission churches have become local churches which produce their own theologies, the need of a dialogue between local theologies is obvious.

Second: Moreover, the presumptions of European theology have been questioned not only from outside, but also in its own context by secular philosophies. In Europe there has been a process of societal differentiation (secularization) by which the Christian frame of reference has been marginalized to the fringes of society. At the same time globalization and migration brought ethnic minorities which had their own cultures and religions. European theologians have to face multiculturalism and religious pluralism in their own countries. And in this respect they can learn from churches that had to face multiculturalism from the beginning of their existence.

Third: The Second Vatican Council recognized and approved the shift that had taken place. Looking back at the Second Vatican Council, Karl Rahner said that the most important result of the council was that the Church became aware that it had become a World Church. (15) In its documents the council challenges churches everywhere to become self-reliant, mature and local in such issues as finances, personnel and theology. However, as local theologies within the 'universal' church they must have a world-wide dimension. This is, however, easier said than done. After having worked for 20 years in Latin America and coming back to Europe to be professor in pastoral theology in Innsbruck, Franz Weber noted that his European colleagues take up contextual theologies from Africa, Asia and Latin America with eagerness, but that they do not change their Western outlook and superiority complex. European theologians treat third world theologies as if they are exotic fruits that supplement their traditional European dishes. He notes that the export firm that the church used to be, had become a multi-national import firm. (16)

Almost forty years after the official opening of the Second Vatican Council, local churches are still struggling to recognize that they are not the same, yet one. Intercultural theology is anew attempt to do justice to local theologies and particular experiences of churches within the universal church. It deals with such old issues as unity and diversity in theology; particularity and universality of churches; localization and globalization of contexts; in short: inculturation and interculturalization. This new challenge asks for another method. (17) Shortly after Karl Rahner declared missiology to be a practical theological discipline, Adolf Exeler, who was the pastoral theologian in Munster, introduced the idea of a comparative pastoral theology. (18) Once the great variety of theological approaches has been recognized, comparisons can be made. One can look for similarities and differences.

As a consequence, there is the possibility of mutual enrichment and critical interrogation. (19) When I see the helplessness of Dutch parishes to overcome the shortage of priests I often think of our parish in Tanzania where the small Christian communities largely depend on lay leaders and lay ministers. When I see European bishops struggling to find answers to being minority churches in largely non-Christian environments: How much could they learn from their colleagues in Indonesia or India, where Christian communities have been minority groups since the very beginning of their existence? (20)

The aim of the comparative method is not to copy a theological approach which has been developed from one context into another context, but to stimulate critical and creative thinking. There are comparisons at different levels. Some comparisons are purely descriptive and analytic, other comparisons are evaluative. (21) In 1989, ten years before we started the Nijmegen Graduate School of Theology, the then department of missiology at this faculty, under the direction of Professor Arnulf Camps, attempted to launch an "International Course: M.A. in Comparative Theological Methods". Seemingly, the time was not yet ripe then.

3. *Intercultural hermeneutics.*

It is important to acknowledge that an intercultural hermeneutics does not exist yet. It is being developed in response to the growing need of intercultural understanding and communication, but it is still at an early stage. (22) To begin with, it is not clear at all what is meant by intercultural hermeneutics. Different terms are used, and the focus shifts with the prefix.

The prefix 'multi-' just means 'having many of'. Multi-cultural hermeneutics takes into account the existence of many cultures. 'Inter-' means 'between', 'from one to the other'. Inter-cultural hermeneutics refers to the understanding between two different cultures. 'Cross-' means more or less the same as 'inter'. But in theoretical studies, the term 'cross-cultural hermeneutics' seems to refer to the generalizations that are made about inter-cultural understanding. 'Trans' means 'across' or 'beyond' Trans-cultural hermeneutics moves beyond the existence of particular cultures, or culture as such. Consequently one can state that 'cultures do not exist'.

Intercultural hermeneutics is the theory and the method of interpretation and understanding across cultural boundaries. It deals with the question to what extent 'the others' really differ from 'us', whether and under what conditions the understanding of 'the others' as 'others' is possible. In short, intercultural hermeneutics is the hermeneutics of the intercultural encounter. (23)

We must acknowledge the fact that hermeneutics largely remains a Western enterprise, that it is dominated largely by the Western philosophical tradition, and that this tradition is increasingly challenged by nonwestern philosophers.

The 'North-South dialogue' on hermeneutics can be summarized in four points. (24)

1. In classical hermeneutics the aim is ultimately to understand oneself. It is an individualistic enterprise. The non-Western hermeneutics has a communitarian approach.
2. Classical hermeneutics is focused on harmonization. Intercultural hermeneutics recognizes differentiation. The other as a stranger is to be done justice.
3. Classical hermeneutics is seen as instrumental: the reader takes possession of the text, makes the text his own property. Intercultural hermeneutics is relational.
4. Classical hermeneutics is based on a propositional understanding of truth; intercultural hermeneutics is based on existential understanding of truth. It is a commonly held opinion among African and other 'third world' theologians that the Western logic, which is based on the Aristotelian 'law' of non-contradiction, is universalized too easily. This is clearly the case with Gadamer's 'fusion of horizons' and the 'theory of communicative competence' of Habermas. (25)

One decision is crucial, for it determines the direction of intercultural hermeneutics and intercultural theology: Do we start from the assumption that all people are the same (read: like us), or, if they are not yet the same, that they will become the same by the process of economic globalization and cultural homogenization — which in the long run would mean that there is no need for intercultural theology — or, on the contrary, does the process of globalization lead to marginalization and diversification?

4. *Subaltern hermeneutics.*

My contention in this contribution is that the decision on this point should be made on the basis of a careful analysis of cultural contact and cultural change 'from within' and 'from below'. This is what is meant by 'subaltern hermeneutics'. (26) In my study of religious dynamics in Sukumaland I asked what happens when members of two different cultural meaning-systems meet. Although I would not ask the same question now as I did 15 years ago, recognizing on the basis of a new understanding of culture that one cannot simply oppose two cultures as if they are monolithic entities, 'us' and 'them', the answers are still illustrative: 1. Some people kept a foot in two systems, leaving them as

they were, taking spiritual and material help from both sides. They were Christians on Sunday, indigenous believers on Monday.

Some people rejected completely one of the two, sticking to either a European-Christian civilization or going back to the 'path of their ancestors'.³ Some people rejected both, which was the attitude of some intellectuals who adhered to African ujamaa socialism which had a secular world view.⁴ But the majority created an intermediate set of beliefs and practices creating a synthesis between the two systems. My study showed the ease with which people understood strange (Christian) beliefs and practices in terms of their own (indigenous Sukuma) frame of reference. On the basis of a 'common ground', or a 'primal religiosity', rosaries were interpreted by my informants as 'amulets of the Christians,' and 'amulets' were interpreted as 'indigenous rosaries', a phenomenon which I earlier labelled a 'working misunderstanding'. My recent studies of Christianity and Islam in Tanzania show that the third alternative (secularism) died out, 'religionism' is alive as never before, which seems to be a world-wide phenomenon — Peter Berger even speaks about a desecularization of the world (27) — and that the second alternative (fundamentalism) had become stronger.

An important issue in Tanzania today is how to cope with religious extremists or fundamentalists, (28) an issue that was absent from the national debate when I lived there in the 1980s. This also seems a world-wide phenomenon. Whereas I do agree with constructivist theories that cultures are not monolithic blocks, that they are extremely diverse (not homogeneous) and flexible (not static), it goes without saying that ethnic groups often engage in collective responses to subordination with recourse to practices and beliefs that anthropologists nowadays tend to call 'essentialist', stressing their own cultural identity in contrast to 'the others'. (29) For a Sukuma the statement 'I am a Sukuma' refers to a reality. To write this subaltern understanding of culture or cultural identity off as 'popular' or 'pre-scientific' knowledge that has to be replaced by a deeper or better anthropological insight, namely the insight that all talk about cultural identity is purely instrumental and a mere product of construction, an illusion to which nothing corresponds in reality, is a manifestation of academic arrogance and not very helpful to the subaltern movements' quest for self-determination. One can understand the 'culturalist' notions in the subaltern movements' quest for authenticity from Pierre Bourdieu's model of habitus. (30) The habitus is a set of dispositions which inclines agents to act and react in certain ways.

These dispositions are inculcated, structured, durable, generative, and even embodied. Particular practices or perceptions are the product of the relationship between the habitus and the 'field' or 'market'. A market is a structured space of positions which are determined by different kinds of resources or 'capital' by which people or groups of people serve their own interests. According to Bourdieu, the confusion surrounding 'cultural identity' stems in part from the fact that one tends to forget that classifications are subordinated to practical functions and oriented towards the production of social effects. (31) Moreover, practical classifications contribute to the production of what they apparently describe. Classifications institute realities by using the power of objectification in discourse. The act of calling 'Sukuma' the language spoken by those who are called 'Sukuma' because they speak that language, and by calling the region in which this language is spoken 'Sukumaland', is not ineffective. The effectiveness of the performative discourse which claims to bring into existence what it asserts is proportional to the authority of the person who makes the assertion. But the objectification in discourse depends also on the degree to which the discourse is grounded in the objectivity of the group to which it is addressed, this is, in the recognition by the members of the group, as well as in the economic and cultural properties they share in common. Bourdieu goes beyond the dichotomy of constructivism and culturalism. He criticizes post-modern relativism and constructivism, without relapsing into a 'cultural grammar' theory or an economic determinism. Cultural diversity is related to class differentiation, but class is defined in a broad sense as a position in a field. Coming back to the question at the end of the previous section: I am not

convinced of the cultural homogenization thesis. It is my contention that cultures do exist, be they more flexible and diverse than they were thought to be, that being a multi-cultural society is a problem and intercultural understanding a necessity. (32) With this we are back to the urgency of an intercultural hermeneutics which takes cultural distinctiveness seriously.

Conclusion

Missionaries have a great expertise in coping with cultural differences. They know by experience what it means to live and work in another culture. They realize that the more you get to know another people, the less you understand them. Consequently many missionaries are contributing to the development of intercultural hermeneutics as the hermeneutics of intercultural encounter.

Many missionaries experience that they are no longer at home in their own culture and not yet at home in the host culture. (33) They are intercultural ministers in the sense that they constitute an intermediate culture. From this we can add another meaning to the term 'inter-cultural' than the one given above. Inter-cultural refers to the space between cultures, or the culture in-between. Interculturation is a missionary challenge for the church in the 21st century. Interculturation does not abandon the concept of inculturation, but broadens it. Missionaries are mediators between different cultural orientations, bridge-builders between people of other faiths, signs and instruments of solidarity, scouts of the promised land, forerunners of a 'global ecumene' in a creolizing world.

Notes:* Dr. Frans Wijsen (b. 1956 in Maastricht, the Netherlands) did research on Christianity in East Africa and popular religion in the Netherlands. He is a Professor of Missiology and Director of the Graduate School of Theology at the Catholic University of Nijmegen. His address: PO Box, 9103, 6500 HD Nijmegen – The Netherlands; e-mail: F.Wijsen@theo.kun.nl
1. Association of the Universities in the Netherlands, Assessment of Research Quality, Utrecht, 2000. I have to confess that the religious studies programme of my own university, is focused exclusively upon the European context.

2. F. Wijsen, J. van Slageren, Missiologie-beoefening in Nederland en België, in: *Wereld en Zending* 27 (1998/4), 25-34.

3. Cf. *Intercultural Theology. A Challenge for the 21st Century*. Prospectus 2000 - 2001, Nijmegen Graduate School of Theology.

4. Cf. D. Bosch, *Transforming Mission. Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, Maryknoll 1991; M. Geijbels, *Mission and Dialogue*, in: *Studies in Interreligious Dialogue* 10 (2000/1), 30-43.

5. As a matter of fact it was just a rediscovery of the theology of the 'seminal word' of the early church. Cf. A. Roest Crolius, *What is so new about inculturation?*, in: *Gregorianum* 59(1978) 721-738; J. Waliggo et al., *Inculturation: Its Meaning and Urgency*, Nairobi 1986.

6. Cf. D. Irarrázavaj, *Inculturation. New dawn of the Church in Latin America*, Maryknoll 2000.

7. Cf. U. Hannerz, *Cultural Complexity. Studies in the Social Organization of Meaning*, New York 1992.

8. Cf. G. Ritzer, *The McDonaldization Thesis. Exploration and Extension*, London 1997; S. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of the World Order*, New York 1996; B. Barber, *Jihad vs. McWorld*, New York 1995.

9. Cf. E. Hobsbawm and T. Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition*, Cambridge 1983; T. Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition Revisited*, in: T. Ranger and O. Vaughan, *Legitimacy and the State in Twentieth Century Africa*, Oxford (1993) 62-111.

10. Cf. W. van Binsbergen, *Culturen bestaan niet. Rede in verkorte vorm uitgesproken bij de aanvaarding van het ambt van bijzonder hoogleraar 'grondslagen van interculturele filosofie'*, Rotterdam: Erasmus Universiteit, 1999.

11. Cf. J. Blomjous, *Development in Mission Thinking and Practice, 1959-1980. Inculturation and Interculturation*, in: *African Ecclesial Review* 22 (1980/6) 293-298.

12. David Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 455-457, has a brief note on interculturalization. For the need to broaden the concept of inculturation see also M. Amaladoss, *Beyond Inculturation. Can the Many be One?*, Delhi 1998, 16-17.

13. Cf. R. Friedli, *Interkulturelle Theologie*, in: K. Müller, Th. Sundermeier (Ed.), *Lexikon Missionstheologischer Grundbegriffe*, Berlin, 1987, 181.

14. Cf. Dana L. Robert, *Shifting Southward. Global Christianity since 1945*, in: *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, April (2000) 50-58. This shift was the central thesis in W. Bühlman, *The Coming of the Third Church*, Maryknoll 1978.

15. Cf. Karl Rahner, *Towards a Fundamental Theological Interpretation of Vatican II*, in: *Theological Studies* 40 (1979) 716-16. Cf. Franz Weber, *Mission. Gegenstand der Praktischen Theologie?* Frankfurt am Main, 1999, 228. 17. Cf. Hermann Siller, *Überlegungen zur Methode von Theologie Interkulturell*, in: M. Hungerkamp, M. Lutz (Ed.), *Grenzen überschreitender Ethik*, Frankfurt 1997.

18. Cf. A. Exeler, *Vergleichende Theologie statt Missionswissenschaft?*, in: H. Waldenfels (Ed.), "...denn ich bin bei euch", Zurich 1978, 199-211; A. Exeler, *Wege einer vergleichenden Pastoral*, in: L. Bertsch, F. Schlösser (Ed.), *Evangelisation in der Dritten Welt. Anstöße für Europa?*, Freiburg 1981, 92-112.

19. Comparative pastoral theology is not to be confused with comparative theology as the study of religious traditions other than one's own and their theologies. Cf. Fr. Clooney, The emergent field of comparative theology, in: Theological Studies 56, (1995) 521-550.
20. Cf. K1. Piepel, Lerngemeinschaft Weltkirche. Lernprozesse in Partnerschaften zwischen Christen der Ersten und der Dritten Welt, Aachen 1993.
21. Cf. M. Pankoke-Schenk, G. Evers (Ed.), Inkulturation and Kontextualität. Theologien im Weltweiten Austausch, Frankfurt am Main 1994.
22. Cf. R. Schreiter, The New Catholicity. Theology between the Global and the Local, New York 1998, 32.
23. Cf. Th. Sundermeier, W. Ustorf (Ed.), Die Begegnung mit dem Anderen. Plidoyers für eine interkulturelle Hermeneutik, Gütersloh 1991; Th. Sundermeier, Can Foreign Cultures be Understood?, in: Studies in Interreligious Dialogue 4(1994/1) 32-41.
24. Cf. Bénédet Bujo, The Ethical Dimension of Community. The African Model and the Dialogue between North and South, Nairobi 1997; Heinz Kimmerle, Mazungumzo. Dialogentussen Afrikaanse en Westerse filosofieën, Amsterdam/Meppel 1995.
25. Cf. Th. Sundermeier, Den Fremden Verstehen. Eine praktische Hermeneutik, Göttingen 1996, 13, 154.
26. Cf. F. Wilfred, Towards a Subaltern Hermeneutics. Beyond the Contemporary Polarities in the Interpretation of Religious Traditions, in: Jeevadhara 26 (1996) 21, 45-62.
27. Cf. P. Berger, The Desecularization of the World. Resurgent Religion and World Politics, Grand Rapids 1999.
28. Cf. Fr. Ludwig, After Ujamaa. Is Religious Revivalism a Threat to Tanzania's Stability?, in: D. Westerlund (Ed.), Questioning the Secular State, London 1996, 216-236.
29. Cf. E. Fischer, Cultural Logic and Maya Identity. Rethinking Constructivism and Essentialism, in: Current Anthropology 40 (1999/4) 473-499.
30. Cf. Pierre Bourdieu, Outline of a Theory of Practice, Cambridge 1977; Pierre Bourdieu, The Logic of Practice, Cambridge 1990.
31. Cf. Pierre Bourdieu, Language and Symbolic Power, Oxford 1992, 220-228. Bourdieu transcends the opposition that sciences make between reality and the representation (mental image) of reality.
32. Martin Nkafu Nkemnkia coined the African world view 'vitalogy'. He clearly shows that African thinking is different from Western thinking. Cf. Martin Nkafu Nkemnkia, African Vitalogy. A step forward in African Thinking, Nairobi 1999.
33. This experience is well described in: B. Joinet, I am a Stranger in my Father's House. The insertion of the Missionary in a Local Community, in: Pastoral Orientation Service (1972) Nos. 8-9, 17-28.
34. Cf. A. Bellagamba, Mission and Ministry in the Global Church, Maryknoll 1992; A. Kalliath (Ed.), Pilgrims in Dialogue. A new Configuration of Religions for Millennium Community, Bangalore 2000

Possible activity

1. *My Spirituality, then and now.*

Share in intercultural groups of 4 –5 members on the following questions:

1. How did I pray at home as a child?
2. What were my most meaningful experiences of prayer during childhood?
3. What are the central dimensions of my spirituality now?
 - a) in the area of spiritual practices
 - b) my images of God, Christ, mission, life, prayer
 - c) my central struggle in life
4. Finish with silent prayer, the Lord's prayer or a hymn known to everyone.

2. *Symbols of my Relationship with God.*

1. Take 20 minutes to find a material symbol (or to draw picture) of your relationship with God.
2. In multicultural groups of 4 – 5 take turns to present your symbol or drawing and explain its meaning for you.
3. Finish with a period of silence, the Lord's prayer or a hymn known to all.

3. *Exploring Silence*

1. A multicultural group spends 20 minutes together in silence.
2. At the end of 20 minutes the facilitator announces the end of the silence. S/he then says what his experience of that silence was.
3. Using the Mutual Invitation Method other members of the group are invited to say what their experience was of the period of silence.
4. Finish with a short prayer or hymn.

For Reflection

The spiritual concept of the Dreaming provides the framework by which these meanings may unfold on different levels. The term 'Dreaming' is in fact a trivialising English word which does not do justice to the complex concept as such. Franchesca Cubillo, Indigenous art curator of Yanuwa, Larrakia, Wardaman and Bardi descent, explains: The Dreaming is the eternal moment of creation, when the spiritual Ancestors moved across the land, creating the landforms, the plants, animals, people and the languages. Rules and languages were also established by the Ancestors in this timeless moment and are maintained by Aboriginal people in the present. The land is looked after, animals respected, ceremonies performed and social obligations adhered to according to the precepts of these traditions. Aspects of the Dreaming are taught and reinforced from an early age.

Everyone within the community is expected to know, in varying degrees, their place in the Dreaming, their country, kinship and ceremonial obligations. Designs are used to empower objects, people and places within the landscape. The artwork is painted on the bodies of the performers, on the ground on which the ceremony takes place and on ceremonial paraphernalia used during ritual. Songs are sung to establish communication with ancestors at particular locations and at specific times. (2000: 44)

This means that the Dreaming, also known as the Indigenous Law, determines social and religious behaviour and defines the relationship between people and land.

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