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

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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>