Dear Grail women around the world,

The ILT would like to thank you all for the thoughtful responses you made to the first phase of the Txintxa process. We think it is important to present you with an overview of some of the important points made in response to the questions asked. We have also arranged for countries to receive copies of all the responses either electronically or hard copy.

The ‘Overview’ was written by Ruth, in consultation with Mary and Cristina and agreed to by the Theological Resource Workgroup.

We welcome any comments. Please send these to the International Secretariat – iltsecr@planet.nl

The next set of Txintxa papers on the theme ‘Cultural Changes and Spiritual Challenges’ will be distributed in the first half of 2010. In the meantime, we pray that Spirit will be us as we consider the drafts of the new Vision Statement which have been circulated for our reflection and comment.

With love,
Ruth, Mary and Cristina
OVERVIEW FROM RESPONSES TO TXINXTA PAPERS
‘Christian Origins’ and ‘Sources of Grail Dynamism’

Introduction

Responses were received as at 1.10.09 from over 40 groups and 6 individuals in 16 countries – Australia, Belgium (Brussels), Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Kenya, Mexico (some translation still being done), Mozambique, The Netherlands, The Philippines, Papua New Guinea, Portugal, Tanzania, Uganda and the USA.
- Sweden and South Africa have asked for extra time. Brazil is attending to translation.

All Grail members are urged to read and reflect on the responses. They are on the international website and each country will also receive a copy of all responses, either electronically or as a hard copy.

Those who took part in the discussions shared at a deep level and were enthusiastic that Grail women around the world were focussing on the same points for reflection. Great appreciation was expressed for the work of the Milano Grail group and the stimulus it provided, also for those who did the translations.

While a number of groups said there was nothing very new in the ‘Christian Origins’ paper, providing the opportunity to do this reflection on ‘Christian Origins’ in relation to the Grail was seen as innovative and much appreciated. For some newer members, Rachel’s reflections on ‘Sources of Grail Dynamism’ was an ‘eye opener’, giving them a fuller appreciation of the spiritual depths the Grail has and its Christian roots, while longer-time members rejoiced in revisiting our dynamic spiritual story.

Aspects of our Grail vision and values and our Christian origins?

Grail groups identified the following characteristics as particularly coming from our Christian origins:

- The vision of the Kingdom of justice, peace and solidarity with the poor;
- The empowerment of women in taking leadership roles
- House churches, where liturgies are prepared by a community of equals and where community is built through the creation of relationships and the shared search for the Mystery – role of Grail centres in this…
- Unafraid of diversity. “Confrontation among the community may be continuous, but can produce conflicts and spiritual enrichment at the same time”
- The importance of dialogue
- Ekklesia – Church, a civil and political notion rather than a religious one; the assembly of free citizens who meet to decide on their own political and spiritual issues.

For many groups, but not all, faith in Jesus Christ and a desire to live out of Gospel values are still of paramount importance.
**Grail Identity**

*It is clear from the responses that a **high percentage of Grail women** around the world identify themselves as ‘Christian’. That the Grail is an **ecumenical’ movement** was again strongly affirmed.

*At the same time there is a heightened awareness that the Grail is **no longer made up of only Christian women**. We have different cultural backgrounds, theological approaches and backgrounds, interpretations and understandings and spiritual practices… Some recognise Jesus and the gospels as their primary inspiration, others do not. These Grail women identify as ‘**non-Christian’** or ‘**post-Christian**’. It would be helpful for all of us to understand more deeply the spiritual base of those who have moved to these pathways and sources of inspiration.

However, it seems true to say that many Grail women, Christian and non-Christian alike, have embraced insights into the Mystery from Creation and a variety of other spiritual sources, from study and life experiences and have woven these new threads into their spiritual ‘web’.

* There appears to be openness to considering **how more women of religious traditions other than Christian** can become part of the Grail of the future. At the same time there is affirmation that it is important to be rooted in one’s own faith tradition.

One group made this reflection -

‘We see Jesus and Buddha as examples of how we want to live. Both of them were very open to the outcasts of society and taught us how to live by love and compassion instead of hierarchies. They saw and respected the uniqueness of every person and encouraged them to express the best of themselves.

The Grail stimulates us to deepen our insights, and to take part, each in our own way, in the work towards empowering of women, peace, global justice, overcoming poverty, ending trafficking, protecting the earth.

These are basic Christian and Buddhist deeds of compassion’.

* **For all of us, God/The Mystery/the quest for the higher spiritual good remains central to our lives** and we highly value our shared history as a faith community. We endeavour to be faithful to our calling to be **women of contemplation and radical action**. Mutual respect between us in matters of faith, as in other dimensions of our lives, is clearly a common wish, as is the desire to take the time to dialogue more about our differences.

* A hope was expressed that we can find a **ritual that unites us**– as the Eucharist has done from the beginning of the Grail and up to more recent times.

* There is a call from some to reconsider the **place and meaning of ‘sacrifice’ and suffering** in our shared life in the 21st century, as these elements have been part of our Grail spirituality since the beginning.
Diversity in the Grail

* A lot of discussion is recorded around the notion of ‘diversity’ and the different kinds of diversity we experience in the Grail. ‘Diversity’ is recognized as a constitutive element of the Grail, as Grail women come from different cultures, races, classes, countries… Our lived experience and continuing struggles for understanding and appreciation of the richness of our different cultures, insights, values, worldviews… have become a precious part of belonging to the Grail for each of us.

It is clear from many of the responses that, at the beginning of the 21st century, we are also challenged to explore more deeply, not only our Christian origins, but also other spiritualities and faith traditions and to dialogue more deeply about the spiritual diversity present in the Grail today. There is a willingness to enter into this dialogue. This exploration, it is understood, will bring uncertainty and discomfort at times, but will also challenge us to create new ways of thinking and doing together. We trust in the Spirit and each other but need sufficient time to listen deeply to each other.

Questions raised for consideration around Grail Identity

*What will be our identity in the 21st century?
- renewed identity of the Grail – needs deepening
- work at clarifying the elements that form the basis of our shared self-understanding.
- the question about what is still essential needs much more pondering and talking about at length.
- do we still have a unifying principle or not?
* Is the Grail ready internationally to become a multi faith movement? What would that mean for us?’ Do we have boundaries?
* What do we do when women of other religions want to join the Grail?
* Would new women from other faith traditions be invited to become Grail members or collaborators?’

Other important observations shared

There is a desire among us
*to take enough time to continue to dialogue together about matters of faith and spirituality and to listen deeply to each other
* to take care concerning the language we use to avoid raising unnecessary tensions

Referred to the Theological Resource Work Group for future reference and work
*More sharing on our Christian origins: revisit early Christianity and the gospel message.
* More study and reflection on other religious traditions and spiritual practices, including ‘post-Christian’
* Cultural changes and Spiritual Challenges.
* Others to be discerned…

Ruth Crowe, November 2009