TXINTXA: PAPER 2: U.S. GRAIL RESPONSES

GROUP RESPONSES

THE BRONX, NEW YORK

October 8, 2010

A small grouping of Bronx Grail women met on Friday evening, October 8th to continue discussion of the Txintxa process, phase II. We began by giving a brief explanation or Txintxa which is like our Grail pre-meeting potluck supper. We each bring something to share. Each has something special that she is good at making or that she always brings. If something is missing someone runs out to get it. In the end we enjoy the whole that is made with all the contributions. It nourishes us and helps us enter into the meeting. In the Txintxa process, we all have to bring our spirituality and share it. We are doing that in the whole Grail International so that we can be nourished and do our work in the world.

Summary of discussions:
Women identify with one another. We have grown as a women support group and our spirituality has deepened.

Some of the challenges are:

- Our (Bronx) membership is decreasing. We need to find ways to include more women in the group and to see that we are welcoming and sensitive to the others.
- Language is a barrier for group sharing. Simultaneous translation does not give time for women to respond. It is better to do sequential translation with time to speak even though it takes much longer.
- Organization of our meeting times is difficult because everyone is very busy and has different schedules.

Bronx Grail Meeting October 08, 2010 Txintxa Part II
Opening Song: Santa Maria del Camino

1. Each person give the first word that comes to mind when you hear the word: Culture
   - Rituals
   - Dance
   - Custumbres (Customs)
   - Irish
   - Clash
   - Food
   - Viajes (Travels)
   - Bebidas (Drinks)
   - Clothing
   - Flags
   - Decorations
   - Reoso (Mexican Shawl)
   - Singing
   - Family
   - Instruments
   - Celebration
   - Music

2. Brainstorm: What are the strongest cultural influences present in our part of the USA…
   - The South Bronx?
   - Drugs
   - Ignorance
   - Individuality
   - Gangs
   - Hesitance
   - Financial struggles
   - Consumerism
BRONX

In twos discuss:
In what ways is the spirituality of our Grail grouping being affected by/challenged by these cultural changes?

Negative Effects:
- Youth killing one another.
- Killing and stealing.
- Depression.
- Lose faith ... God does not exist.
- Question God ... Always asking why.

Positive Effects:
- Finding God/other spiritual guidance brings strength.
- Travel/ a group like ours learn to share, learn to love, learn respect and diversity from one another’s culture.
- Learn other’s beliefs, church, religion and acceptance.
- Growth and connection with God at St. Luke’s.
- A challenge is the language barrier at work and at school.
- Growing and changing as women and finding spiritual strength.
- Support system.
- Women identify with each other.
- Inner growth.
- Increase spirituality.
- Grow in prayer and knowledge.
- Challenge to incorporate men into our group.

Then in fours discuss:
In what ways has the spirituality of our Grail group shifted over recent times and what do you see as the major challenges for the future?

Challenges:
Group 1:
- There are less participants in Bronx Grail group now than previously.
- There is less communication with each other.
- The language barrier is a problem. We lose time when we are translating.
- But it is a good challenge to the group.
- To incorporate men who may feel left out or that the Grail is changing their women.

Group 2:
- Our group gets smaller and smaller and that does affect us spiritually.
- Sometimes we get hurt by what someone has said and then we don’t come anymore.
- Sometimes we talk too much and we don’t listen to what others say.
- We need to be humble if we have hurt someone and ask forgiveness.
- If someone is talking about another person to us, we need to be direct and stop the comments, directing her to the person about whom she is speaking. When this kind of thing happens it is death to spirituality.
- Some people do not want to change. But we need to pray. We need to know that the Devil does exist.
- We need to face that.

Closing Ritual:
Each one lights a candle and speak her hope/wishes/prayer for the Grail for the coming year.
Closing song: Yo soy mujer.
CINCINNATI, OHIO

October 10, 2010

Cincinnati regional meeting. Present: Marian Schwab, Emily Snyder, Jean Wilson, Frances Martin, Meg Bruck, Lenie Schaareman, Elizabeth Robinson, Joy France, Deborah Sullivan, Mary Kay Delgado, Becky Hill, Nicki Black, Terri Carter, Quanita Mundy, Wendy Budzinski

1a) Forces we see as growing/having a strong cultural impact:
   - Materialism; consumerism; growing preoccupation with personal comfort
   - Growing economic inequality/widening gap between rich and poor/disappearance of middle class
   - Individualism
   - Information technology/multiplicity of choices
   - Immigration
   - Media/entertainment; violence in media
   - Misogyny
   - Deep political conflict; religion in politics
   - Racial inequality; legacy of slavery
   - Fragmentation of modern life/family fragmentation
   - Lengthening of life expectancy

1b) Forces we see as declining in our US culture:
   - Attachment to/dependence upon religion
   - Family meals/family time/home skills
   - Availability of time
   - Sense of self-sufficiency
   - Traditional attachment to the earth/connection to agriculture
   - Influence of elders/respect for elderly and dying
   - Listening/discipline of listening
   - Tolerance of those who are different
   - Loss of “the feminine”
   - Economic security among very large segments of the US population

2) In what ways is the spirituality of the US Grail being affected/challenged by these cultural influences?
   - We are becoming desensitized to suffering.
   - Christianity is becoming defined in negative, ultra-conservative terms that are divisive
   - We are losing religious affiliation as a source of community….. Difficult to be involved in your faith personally, amid all the diversity and cultural clamor
   - We are comfortable with our own privileged position in the world.
   - Increasingly spirituality is seen as an individual rather than a communal pursuit, both reflecting and contributing to the fragmentation of life

3a) In what ways has the spirituality of the US Grail shifted over recent times?
   - The experience of spiritual diversity among us as Grail is uncomfortable and painful; AND it’s difficult to handle the spiritual diversity practically.
   - The Grail has made room for other faiths, even when that was uncomfortable. This opening-up process is still continuing.
   - Difficulty with planning/experiencing rituals that everyone feels are appropriate and in which everyone can participate. Individualism is really a problem within the Grail in the US.
   - Loss of ability to share in worship together. Finding authentic spiritual expression true to the Grail today. Great pressure on traditional Catholic ways of worship.
CINCINNATI

- Challenge to love interpersonally: we need to ignite the spirit, relate spirit to spirit, mind to mind, body to body. Everyone’s spirit affects the whole; challenges affect the whole. Groups are deeply influenced by the spirit of individuals.
- There is a challenge to authenticity for both new and old Grail members – challenge to make room for the others – hard to give up space
- Struggling with the identity of the Grail: a soup in which all blend? A salad in which each piece is distinct? We need to find the olive oil. (Is spirituality the olive oil?)
- Is the search for “the thread that connects us” despite our diversity what really connects us?

3b) What do we see as the major challenges for the future (given this shift)?
- Appreciating and tolerating one another; accepting the mystery of being together
- Deciding how we communicate about the Grail, given its diversity
- Choosing to come together intentionally over our shared concern for/investment in the EARTH.
- Finding better ways to integrate into our celebrations the ordained women who are Grail members
- Talking honestly and openly to one another about our differences. Talking about where we are spiritually, including about what it means to be Catholic – both those of us who still are “practicing” (although critical) Catholics and those who identify themselves as former Catholics – since at least in the Cincinnati area, the majority of us (even Explorers) have Catholic backgrounds, and that has a major impact on our spirituality
- Not pretending we all believe the same things. Having the courage to say to each other what we really believe – not just about spirituality but about race and economics and our responsibility to the rest of the world
- Committing ourselves to confronting together the shared challenges to our spiritual lives, for example, lack of time, busy-ness, pressures from our US culture to conform, lack of time to reflect; being more critical and aware of the negative aspects of our own culture
- Sharing honestly about our own spirituality. We could talk to one another about the books we are reading that are affecting us, eg Half the Sky, The Warmth of Other Suns; books by Barbara Kingsolver and Wendell Barry
- Changing the image/reality of Grailville from “a nice little place” to a place of huge international commitment
- Insisting that all Grail members need an international experience (so we are opened to those living a different cultural reality); finding ways to participate together in the work of the Commission on the Status of Women
- Prioritizing our time and resources really to be a part of the International Grail – getting beyond our own little worlds and acknowledging how much more (and how much more diversity) there is in the rest of the Grail in the world

4) Further comments or observations:
- The Grail’s spiritual diversity is a microcosm of the challenge to world religions to accept diversity and work together to create peace, save the planet, etc, etc
- Racial diversity in the Grail..............we need that diversity.
  - Women of color need to see the diversity, need to see on the US Grail website the racial and international diversity of the Grail.
  - The US Grail website needs to be freshened up so that Grailville and the Grail as a whole are not just embodied in white people’s faces
Discussion at Cornwall Grail Center

Present: Ceci Figueroa, Kathi Hurley (Explorer), Lucy Jones, Simonetta Romano, Rosa Ruiz, Emily Thomas, Sharon Thomson

In our opening reflection, we considered the colorful weavings and talked about a sense of chaos vs. patterns such as concentric circles, symmetry, looking closer to see beyond and into “chaos.” There is a problem with the connotation of diversity; in some languages it has a negative meaning. Diversity assumes a “norm” which is the context (e.g., Catholic practice was a norm for the Grail in the U.S. in its earlier years).

Two ways of imaging a society or a group were put forth—

A mosaic, where individuals are unique yet come together to make a whole picture

A kaleidoscope, where the whole is one picture, but can change while the pieces are combined in different ways.

“Diversity” emphasizes the pieces of the whole. “Plurality” looks at the whole and recognizes the pieces. We talked about the “mortar” or glue that holds the pieces together and what might represent that in our metaphor. Cultural influences might be the background that contains the pieces and shapes the whole. The Spirit that blows in ways we never know can be envisioned in the Kaleidoscope metaphor, as pieces are turned to make new and surprising combinations of pictures.

Main Cultural Influences Impacting U.S. Society and Dying Influences

The strong tradition of religious freedom in the U.S. means there is a wide range of religious practice (or non-practice). Tolerance of difference is a norm, but there is also blowback and reactionary responses to the racial, ethnic, and religious diversity that makes up the culture. For example, there has been growing acceptance of the rights of Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender (GLBT) persons, including the right to marry. Several states have passed laws to allow gay marriage or civil unions. Conservative folks, including some traditionally religious groups, have been threatened by this development and claim that heterosexual marriage is at risk.

Another sign of the U.S.’s tradition of accepting diversity is the historic election of our first Black president in 2008.

Mass media, advertising and technology are great influences in the U.S., with the emphasis on the newest and latest fashion or gadget, consumerism and favoring of youth culture, speed and built-in obsolescence. The Civil Rights and Women’s Movement of the 60s and 70s—with a sense of community to build a better world, gave way to the Me Generation in the 80s and atomizing the culture into individuals and families concerned mostly about building up themselves, pushing empowerment movements to the edges of society. Nevertheless, individual freedom and protection of individual freedom are powerful aspects of the American psyche.

Fundamentalism is expressed in the culture in the Religious Right of the Reagan/Bush era and now in the Tea Party in the political arena. The “culture wars” continue on issues such as abortion, gun ownership, concern for the environment, separation of church and state and other social issues. Ultimately, we as a society welcome diversity and are threatened by it.

Gender roles are not fixed in the way they once were. Women have made great strides to control their own destinies. Younger women are free to express their sexuality and sometimes to the chagrin of the women who fought to be taken seriously by the society as equal partners in making the world we live in.
CORNWALL

Ours is a diverse culture, made up of many cultures—the younger generation, the Mexican American community, the Asian communities of the Bay area, the many permutations of white, middle class communities, just to name a few which we recognize and know and in which we number ourselves. We cross boundaries regularly. Much of popular culture reflects this diversity. In the realm of religion and spirituality, there are many options from which to choose. Among churchgoers, people will “shop around” for the local church that suits them. Loyalty to a denomination is more the exception than the rule. All kinds of alternative expressions of spirituality are available for those who are not inclined to attend church. Church attendance has been declining for decades, although most Americans (90%) say they believe in God. There is a smorgasbord of spiritual “treats” from which to choose. It’s not so surprising that a society made up largely of pioneers, immigrants, and descendants of the same, with the expansive imagination that there is more to explore beyond the known realm—that this same sensibility would play out in its spiritual expression, practice and search.

Spiritual Challenges facing our Grail due to Impact of Cultural Influences

Our main challenge is to discover how we hold together as a unified spiritual community in the midst of our own plurality when we don’t share spiritual practices. Is there a collective ritual or unifying principle that can be the “grout” in our mosaic made of the beautiful pieces of our individual uniqueness? (Perhaps the “grout” metaphor is too static for a Movement—how might the Spirit hold us together in a dynamic, moving kaleidoscope?)

When the U.S. Grail diversified in the 70s—the unifying interaction became our social justice activism. The Eucharist and Catholic liturgy were no longer the glue that held all members in the circle. Now we have Protestant Christians as well as non-Christians in our membership. The unifying spiritual principle is that we are searching and seeking for deeper spiritual meaning, and individuals find that and express that in different ways.

We have a commitment to diversity, and with that comes the challenge of finding common ground. We can find unity by way of our shared experiences (our discussion followed an intense weekend of deep sharing in the Cornwall Metanoia gathering with 20 Grail women). We share in some of our identities, for example, mothers relate to the experience of motherhood. Even women who are not mothers relate to that emotional landscape. We find commonality in sharing our pain—when we hear the sorrows of another’s life, we empathize and feel with her the sadness or tragedy in her story. Any deep feeling such as joy or pain or fear, when shared openly takes down barriers and is an invitation into another’s life and existence. We were reminded of the common feeling of oneness with those who suffered in the tsunami of 2008 or watching the devastation of Katrina. Through our struggles and stories we experience each other beyond our identities and see each other as human beings like our selves. Our struggles and stories are our sacred text.

In Cornwall, we discussed the limitations of our context in a local community where we are segregated (geographically) by class and race. Our challenge is to share a vision of the largeness of the Grail as we meet individuals and they meet us—we represent something that is bigger and deeper than we who represent that wholeness. It is a challenge to be clear about what the Grail is as we define it for potential members and friends.

How might we midwife opportunities for deep interactions, so that more Grail members and friends can enter into the zone of shared humanity? Is there a possibility for a Metanoia type gathering at the international level? (One key aspect of Metanoia groups is intentionally small group size—no more than 20 for a weekend.)

We are challenged to truly listen to each other deeply, to be fully present to one another, rather than bringing our own agenda, but opening our selves to the other with our full attention.
CORNWALL

We are challenged in the Grail at large to hear the stories of our gay, lesbian and bisexual sisters and to consider how we might work against injustices within the Grail and in the society.

We are challenged by the limitation of our own time and energy—we work on many different things to keep the Center going, so that we are not able to focus on one big thing.

We are challenged by cultural differences in how we talk to one another—how much silence or space is permitted between speakers or to allow a slow speaker to finish. Patterns of speaking differ in the South, the Midwest and the Northeast of the U.S. (notably NYC). We are challenged by misunderstandings that arise due to different cultural understandings.

We are challenged to see the link between the suffering of the peoples of the world and what we are doing. We are challenged to find the power in the stories we share. We are challenged to honor what we are doing in our different areas.

We are challenged to keep the Spirit alive in this place, because we do not yet know its power. We are challenged to be true to the Spirit and to listen for it. We hold a space for the movement of the Spirit.

Addendum: A recent series of PBS (Frontline and American Experience joint venture) is very informative about religion and culture in the U.S. titled God in America. Some of us viewed it after our discussion and recommend it for enhancing further discussion. The link is http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/

DAYTON, OHIO

August 17, 2010

Present: Rose Mary Clark, Virginia Deters, Ellen Duell, Barbara Gibbons

We looked at Phase two of the Txintxa Papers. We read Sara Jones’ paper and saw similarities in our own culture.

Most of us preferred diversity because of our own diverse ways of following our paths where our spirituality has led us. We saw that our diverse paths connected in a plural kind of way.

We looked at the colored cards and did the circle with the arrows.

Three of us saw card one as more like the Grail as things are not as defined as card two. Things are not that clear for each country and for us as a movement.

We saw that spirituality can infuse religion.

Spirituality is central to each of us and will lead us to the divine and is at the source of the "works" we do. Our oneness in the Grail is this spiritual core. There is no diversity in this center.

(Maybe this is where card two comes in with its interweaving.)

LOUISIANA: SOUTHWEST GROUP

We had a very small group for our discussion, due to illness of a number of our members. But it was probably one of the best discussions we have ever had on Spirituality.

Strongest cultural influences present in our country today.
LOUISIANA

We met at the height of the controversy in our country with the burning of the Qurans, and the controversial building of a Mosque near ground zero. We were all saddened with the state of unrest in the U.S. today. We talked about the extremes of the media, one that fan the flames. Diversity/plurality and racism in the U.S. has certainly influenced the American Culture of today. How do we hang on to our beliefs and willingness to change? It was a positive experience for all of us. It is hard to remain positive in this time of hate of fear, but we dare to embrace change as we move forward.

_In what ways is the spirituality of your Grail grouping being affected/challenged by these cultural influences._

Change has been rapid. But we agreed we have to have a broader view and that growing older does influence our views. We must work at having a broader view of things and that reading about world events strengthens our determination to be women of vision with a world view in a very complex world of hate and narrow approach to problems we come in contact with. The spirituality of the Grail encourages us to be open to change, open to others, open to the where the spirit is moving us. We truly believe in world vision and are encouraged by the spirituality of Grail sisters all over the world.

_In what ways has the spirituality of our Grail group shifted and the major challenges for the future?_

Our group focused on the changes we have been through, that experience has helped us know that change is moving us to be stronger and better people and not to fear change, but rather to embrace it. We still meet monthly and although there is lots of diversity we have learned to live with diversity and plurality, and we still move forward as women of courage in an ever changing world.

_Further comments or observations._

Help keep us grounded but challenged. Winds of change can be felt all around us.

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MICHIGAN GROUP

Submitted by Mary Theresa Coyle in Mio, MI

When considering “Cultural Changes and Spiritual Challenges” we felt the strongest cultural influences present in our culture today to be militarism, consumerism, fundamentalism, media, sexism. We are aware also of movements to green energy, community development, support of local food production and a sense of bio-regionalism.

Our local group is affected by these forces in our efforts to pursue non-violence in our study and activities. We participate in Bioneers, Pax Christi, Catholic Caucus, Elephants. Elderberrys Cosmos and Spirit, Zen Meditation Retreat to work on transformation within existing systems and share a deeper pursuit of spiritual practices.

In our consideration of the two cards, we found card #2 felt like a federation of different groups. It represented a ying – yang for another. In card #1 the vision was more apparent, It seemed more polyphonic. #1 was more creative, lively and #2 was more structured. Both are necessary in a movement or organization.
We enjoyed doing this exercise and became aware of different views that can be in our rather homogenous group. We also became aware of our assumptions that color our judgments.

NEW JERSEY, PENNSYLVANIA AND MARYLAND COMBINED GROUP

October 2, 2010 - Princeton – Final 1

Goal: Build the foundation of our future together

Grail affinity groups:
Pennsylvania: Maureen Tate, Mary DiVito, Alexa Kane, Theresa Czerwinski, & Mary Helen Adler via written commentary;
New Jersey: Debra Lembo, Carolyn Vadala, & Trina Paulus via written commentary;
Maryland: Marian April Goering.

Note takers: Alexa & Carolyn

Background: IGA 2006 noted shift / need regarding Spirituality
International Spiritual Forum, Portugal 2007 created 3 reflections / goals:
1 - Deepen Christian roots - to see where we are going;
2 - Review Cultural changes & Spiritual challenges;
3 - Foster Ecumenical & Inter-religious dialogue.

TXINTXA -- “LET’S MOVE AND BUILD TOGETHER” (pronounced Chin Cha!)
‘Txintxa’ is a xangana word from the south of Mozambique; it comes from the verb ku txinxa, “to change.”
It is used as a slogan when a community starts a work project together: changing a hut roof, planting a vegetable garden….

10-2-2010 MEETING NOTES – Initial conversations

1.0 We reviewed meaning of Txintxa, and the 2006 IGA which spawned a goal to understanding Grail spirituality – thus guiding the Vision statement review and the need to have ‘movement’, regarding our spirituality. Thus, in having the conversation, we may change our vision because Catholic / Christian perspectives may have changed.

2.1 We reflected upon the 2 pictures and the terms of Plurality and Diversity - and noted the following:
Diversity indicates an awareness of distinctions. When examining opposites, we find “Diverse vs. Universe”.
Plurality can mean “numerous”. It can be a “political term”. “The political use of plurality means getting the most votes, not necessarily the majority”. One preferred the “conjunction of the word – pluralism”, and further, “plurality gives me comfortability that diversity does not. It seems less problem focused”. The question remained – “what unites us”?

2.2 We reflected on Cards / basket pictures:
Card 1 Diversity = “more things to uncover, less boring, attracted over time to more colors”.
“Patterns were more symmetrical in the card that seemed more diverse”. “Business was confusing”

2.3 Card 2 – “Nice order, easier to live with” “Its orderliness calms me”. “Tricky, as it is not exactly as symmetrical as other”.

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2.4 Question: “What’s in us that strives to find patterns?, order?, symmetry? likenesses? simplicity?”, or feels the energy?

2.6 Our reflection: “Patterns, like ritual, are comforting”. Taking in all of Grail history, where we are & trying to make sense of it all led us to say: “What is the “make-sense-ness” in the Grail? “We are all each complex with multiple dimensions. How can we hang with the differences – accept that it all comes together as one identity? How can we be with our differences and our multiplicity? Embracing and accepting to some degree?”

3.0 Sara’s paper: What was remarkable to us?
3.1 “The WALLS we all have within and without our society”,
3.2 ‘Given NAMES–(experienced Africans with ancient Latin names) is a kernel of how culture was denigrated’.
3.3. “The Children & the language education”. An example was given as below:
3.4. Culture, language, customs & ritual of ones location may change / dictate behavior: For example of values / actions changing – in Swahili culture, walking guests out to their car is the norm; in English, saying goodbye at the door is ok.

12. Language / Ritual affects us & dominate language can acculturate meetings. Grail meetings in English may display a more ‘heady’ or intellectual way of speaking versus a heart centered language. “The dominant language can be an issue of power. Ritual can be a dynamic of power.

Oct 2 2010 - Answering the 4 questions: Main goals for today:
1 - Build picture of cultural influences in our Grail grouping realities
2. Appreciate spiritual challenges experienced & resulting from these cultural influences

Questions for reflection, per paper - 10/2/10 – MD, PA & NJ Meeting Notes

1. What are the strongest Cultural influences present in your country today?

One synthesis:
Today, the USA enjoys unparalleled development, wealth, and technology. Material standards of living are huge. Conversely, some price is paid - damaged food & unhealthy ecology, separated family units, increased poverty, crime, wars, drugs, incarceration and lower educational achievements. Many gifts are gleaned from the diverse population and lifestyles. Mobility allows for wider experiences. Technology allows for wider participation with, and use of, the world. At large, this standard is dependent upon the global society and its economies. However, we still have struggles with this diversity, as non-homogenous systems challenges us – even simply saying ‘different’ is OK, for instance. We are also barraged with so much external stimuli – it feels overwhelming – not only to our schedules, also to our senses, our brains, our very selves.

Group – comments - INFLUENCES:
- Increased Mobility

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- Increased Individualism / Ego (loss of community)
- Self focused, Loss of Communal: Materialistic challenges, Consumerism, Greed focus (vs. Virtues / Spirit)
- The influences of the corporate Media, Increased technology, social networks (Entertainment, Virtual world reality).
- Uncertainty & Fear
- Secularism. American myth vs. Spiritual search
- Separation of church & state & value of, is a reactionism to return to an ideal of the past,
- Militarism & Patriotism - no antiwar movement – how is it ex-patriotism?
- USA now does not have a strong anti-war movement as once was in the 60’s, though many suffer economically, as budget goes to the war machine from the education, infrastructure and social services coffers.
- Compassion & Interconnectedness of all life [is a theme we embrace],
- Green (ecological) Movement is a focus [& seems to be increasing].
- More / faster Multicultural knowledge (inclusive?)
  - Islam is growing, Fundamental Christian coalitions growing, especially in politics.

2. In what ways is the spirituality of your Grail grouping being affected / challenged by these cultural influences?

One synthesis
“No Prayer? No Mass? Eucharist is Sacramental life-presence among us, as Christ. It is not a one-among-many ritual. It's Mystery.” Thus says Nucleus member wisdom. Yet, the daily mass, living the liturgical year, or day, may no longer be intrinsic in Grail lives. Cultural changes, ranging from the incorporation of 60’s counterculture, to Eastern philosophies, or from alienation due to dearth of virtues in all ‘human’ institutions - affects spirituality in the Grail. Mass may not be de rigueur. [Sara’s paper spoke of accepting a woman saying the mass. In contrast, USA ritual may not be Mass centered, at all]. Yet, the familiar (rituals, songs, sacraments, The Mystery), is a draw & familiar to many, as we expand inclusions of the world’s spirituality – earth, native, conscience, etc. We are eager to find ‘what will challenge us’? What gives meaning? What is Eucharist?’ in creating and cultivating Grail spirit.

Group comments - AFFECTS & CHALLENGES
- There is change – a less homogeneous nature of Catholicism in the Grail,
  - Less high culture Catholicism; Diaspora - loss of collective (homogeneous?) units
  - Individualism focused; no longer have a sense of a 'community of goods', [Nucleus attrition]
- Previously, the Grail challenged us to build a new earth - the ideas of forward & upward by Teilhard de Chardin, along with the notion of the ‘mystery of God’ & that we were doing ‘God’s Work’. What is the Grail challenging us for now? How?

- We are a global reality - diverse & affected in all areas - by the world,

- Love Liturgy; however, hate male domination who are unaware of the flock [they pastor], however, the Eucharist keeps me there,

- Meaning of rituals unclear / overwhelming [they are not my rituals]

- Some are not conscious of a Spiritual life

- Time: constant pace ‘BUSY’ (busyism) prevents us from devotions – increased anger & frustration. Negatively affects the children,

- There has been an expanded notion of the HOLY due to the various influences & grace of others’ spiritual practices

3. In what ways has the spirituality of your Grail group shifted over recent times and what do you see as the major challenge for the future?

- Language is less Catholic, loss of Catholic influences,

- Being rooted in a Place – a Parish / Center is no longer in the air we breathe,

- 60’s Cultural Revolution watered down & expanded belief systems (conversion of world / service to Christ)

- Increasing Theme of material world having consciousness,

- Anger with the Church – [we remove ourselves from involvement]

- Shift in a sense of fragmentation in the Grail,

- Shift in [less] identification with the poor [although some still have a mission in this area],

- Shift may not be about the Eucharist now but about the raising of consciousness

- Increased Affirmations for each ones ‘individual’ search,

What are major challenges for future?

- Raise consciousness.

- Increase web of relationships – “the web of relationships over time is what is unifying”.

- It’s OK to say “I do not know spirituality” – that is Grail – AND it’s OK to name the sacred – and that is Grail too, [dichotomy – because that is part of the search].
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-To not name the sacred but participate in it is what has changed the Grail – we are a community of inquirers. There is no one dogma but we are there for the asking together. We experience God in participation.

- Dialogical faith -
  Challenged to Dialogue ‘IN’ Faith versus ‘about’ Faith *
  "e.g. what would a conversation between earth centered spirituality and Eucharistic spirituality look like if we speak about being “one body”?

- NOT no longer Christian; but, not only Christian (Rachel Donders, page 17).

- Challenged to find common ground for eliciting action. Historically, religious belonging helped communities to grow. What will now? Maybe growth only happens for the elite few who hang on & play the game.

- What level of responsibility do / will we have to each other, as Grail & to what degree? Community of goods is a spiritual challenge. It is hard to give up your own will, to care for the sick… Maybe Ecovillage at Grailville gives us hope – to grow a culture of support.

- What is relationship to the HOLY? Also, who talks about a Eucharistic world? And the Holy Spirit? It’s rarely heard of.

- Aging of highly educated Catholics – loss of traditions – “who will lead us?”

- Addition & enculturation of spirituality of other & expanded cultures / practices,

- I believe there is No shift - Do we recruit & form movement? How?

4. Do you have further comments or observations?

- It is relationships [with each other], & unification, that make a difference - the collective consciousness of who we have touched, rather than the collective spiritualism,

- Continue to examine Grail as method toward growth of conscious.

- Stand beyond to a new form,

- Recognize / Instill notion that both Grail & the Church work for the whole world,

- The universe, atoms, & communication lend to deepening of Eucharist / the Body of Christ, - This is my body – ideas of participation,

- Some shifted away from cross-mission – of being with the poor, Social Justice is a work of the Grail How does the Grail work with the poor, as Jesus did, in this time? How do we talk about this now – more as social justice and systemic change? How is the Grail building alliances on behalf of the poor and powerless now? Is that still a compelling value for the US Grail? How?

- It is difficult to break from the parent ‘ritual’ (Catholicism / Grail group / others) esp. without implementation / longevity of a new spiritual practice. A practice acted through the ages IS a Ritual.
NEW JERSEY, PENNSYLVANIA, MARYLAND

- Grail of 40’s & 50’s were trained to be counter culture as to lifestyle. The aesthetic culture in the Grail USA continues to enrich new members. Counterculture lifestyle techniques can be taught. Each country will have its own aesthetics. This is a common value.

- We have a spiritual challenge for all, & all leads to spiritual awareness.

- What will the Grail look like with these changes? Who challenges us now? Who believes in us – to ‘achieve great things’ – beyond what we think we can do & are free to do?

- To not name the sacred but participate in it is what has changed the Grail – we are a community of inquirers. There is no one dogma but we are there for the asking together.

- Trina’s book *Hope for the Flowers* is deep into Asian worlds (ready to be published in Chinese next year. Movie offers abound. If anyone is interested in this development and an expansion of the Grail in Asia.

- Both Grail and Church exist for the whole world growing toward God; it did not exist to be smooth for the “faithful”.


*End of notes – Carolyn & Alexa*

Also see Mary Helen Adler in Individual Responses.

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**PILGRIM PLACE, SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA**

Submitted by Mary Gindhart, 9/25/2010

**Present:** Donna Ambrogi, Eva Fleischner, Mary Gindhart, Elise Gorges, Joann Lamb, Peg Linnehan, Maclovia Rodriguez, Audrey Sorrento, Barbara Troxell, Duanne Welsch, Teresa Wilson. Absent: Audrey Schomer, Marcia Bedard, Kirsten Hurley, Monette Cruz

1. What are the strongest cultural influences present in your country today?

Information about violence all over the world is instantly shared about urban crime, war, and militarization. The U.S. homeland security administration is frequently giving terror alerts. Many movies, television shows and video games portray violent acts. Cell phones, face book, computers are used for communication so person to person, face to face contact is lost.

Many people believe that the U.S. is better than all other countries: we recognize this is a false view of reality. These persons fear that the dominant white Christian majority is losing out. Fear of immigrants and fear of Islam is strong. A “we-they mentality” is widespread.

Human services, health care and education are being cutback in the present economy. Big corporations and banks continue to make large profits. The rich corporations and people are excused from taxes. Some people talk about the US as an “undeveloping country.”
Homelessness is a category of people, shelters for the homeless are provided instead of homes. New jails are built to house huge prison population.

Numerous groups of United State citizens are working actively for change, especially for peace with justice throughout the country.

2. **In what ways is the spirituality of your Grail grouping being affected/challenged by these cultural influences?**

Grail members experience a profound sense of depression in the face of the war mentality, the rise of the right wing Tea Party; the health system that is increasingly providing care by low paid people of color to white people. We are affected by all of the challenges mentioned under question 1. We see the need for a culture of peace. "There are numerous groups of United State citizens working actively for change, especially for peace with justice."

3. **In what ways has the spirituality of your Grail group shifted over recent times and what do you see as the major challenges for the future?**

The Grail group at Pilgrim Place is a community of 12 women within an ecumenical Christian Community. The Pilgrim Place retirement community has Christian men and women, 62 and older, from many Protestant denominations and some Catholics. Many people are white. Some people are African-American, Asian background, Hispanic-American Indian. Most people are on the progressive-liberal side politically. The spirituality at Pilgrim Place has evolved. Now there is a more fragmented search for spirituality than in the past, feminism is a strong influence. There is a weekly Eucharistic circle. There is variety in the grace at meals, in the weekly vespers service. There is active involvement in prayer for peace, demonstrations for peace and overall consciousness of the need for justice to gain peace reflected in all our worship here.

The spirituality of Grail members has changed over time through involvement in the ecumenical movement, actions to promote justice and peace, incorporation of Protestants, Jews and other spiritual seekers into the Grail, working with people from many religious backgrounds, through process theology which is influential at Pilgrim Place, eco-spirituality, living in an ecumenical community, feminism, and a Grail retreat on Celtic spirituality. There is active involvement in prayer for peace, demonstrations for peace and overall consciousness of the need for justice to gain peace reflected in all our worship here.

The 12 of us are not all in the same place regarding Church practice or spirituality. We know that being Catholic or Christian is part of the fiber of our being. Some fight against it. We are aware of the differences. We accept the differences and respect them. We see, as the Grail Faith Message says, "God the Mystery of our lives!"

For the International Grail a major challenge for the future is the diversities of relationships to the Catholic Church and its hierarchy within the Grail.

We agreed with Marian Ronan that the challenge facing us as Grail members is to find the time and energy to clarify and share our differences and commonalities until we can enter into alliances for the sake of a common work.
4. Do you have any further comments of observations?

Regarding the papers:

Sara’s paper was a good case study by a Catholic who recognizes the need for the revival and recovery of African ways of worshipping and many other essential values. We know something of the work on inculturation by Catholics and Protestants that is going on in Africa and Asia and we think it is unfortunate that it has met resistance in some cases.

We know that many of the Grail missionaries and many of the missionaries now retired at Pilgrim Place made strenuous efforts to connect to the people that they served and really identified with the people. Many went as professionals in various fields and worked along side the people.

Marian’s paper is an intellectual analysis. We thought the section, Cultures and Coherence, was important. We realize that culture has many aspects including religion, economics, politics, social institutions, language, the arts, etc.

SMALL GROUP: DEVLINS AND WHITE

Carol White, Kate Devlin, Mary Gene Devlin
This meeting took place on Skype, with Carol in Ireland and Kate and Mary Gene in the states.

1. What are the strongest cultural influences present in your country?

Since Carol is in a different country from K and MG, we decided to compare and contrast some of the cultural influences in the two countries.

The United States is a country that experiences great diversity/pluralism in our culture. Ireland had until the boom years a distinctly homogeneous culture.

The influence of recession can be seen in both countries: people who used to have money don’t have it any more, and there is a general feeling of fear, instability, and distrust. In Ireland evidence of this is in young men committing suicide – two a week in Dublin – leaving their wives and children. In the states, Obama often seems isolated in silence.

In the US, the religious far right has a large political influence. Many young people have some form of spirituality, but not a religion. In Ireland, the Catholic Church is crumbling; in the young, spirituality is less developed – they are not religious, not clearly spiritual, but not atheist either.

In the question of “left and right,” it’s hard to compare Ireland with the United States. In Ireland, it’s what county you come from, what political party your family has always belonged to, etc. Until recently, legislators could actually have two jobs at the same time – national and county. The two main parties come out of civil war politics; the third party (more leftist/progressive) never seems to get its act together.

Ireland has a Parliamentary system – 80 % would like to have an election right now but the government doesn’t want to call it because they know they will lose.

Adversarial politics causes great difficulties in Ireland as well as the US.
Both countries have problems with violence, but Ireland started from a much lower level. Drug crime and drug gangs shooting each other have risen and there is a growing culture of fear. The strict gun laws in Ireland mean there is more knife crime. Still, there are only 70-80 homicides per year in the whole country.

A culture of fear fuels Tea Parties in the US. Racism still pervades this country. There is a question about how much of the Tea Party movement is racist – a reaction to having a black president. Also fear of Muslims, immigrants. Most Americans are not openly racist. There is racism in Ireland – on a much smaller scale – no history of slavery. Ireland was white and Irish until 9-10 years ago. The Government has pushed asylum seekers around – the more recession hurts people, the more you can stir up racist feelings but there are no Irish applicants for the jobs immigrants take.

Irish major issue – economic situation, mistrust of government, lawyers, bankers – in Dublin consumerism really grew in the boom years, becoming like American consumerism. There is anger now about loss, but it dissipates – no big demonstrations like in Greece and France.

The economy is a major issue in American culture, but those who are suffering most from it support the very people who caused much of the recession. The upcoming mid-term elections have many right wing extremists spending exorbitant sums of money on their campaigns with a real chance of winning. The Internet has offered a means to join with others to work for issues of peace and justice to counteract these fear-based forces. The United States is still waging two wars at this time, an issue that uses vast sums of money, which could be used for promotion of health care, jobs, and general well being of people in this culture.

2. In what ways is the spirituality of your Grail grouping being affected/challenged by these cultural influences? And 3. In what ways has the spirituality of your Grail group shifted over recent times and what do you see as the major challenges for the future?

The culture of diversity/pluralism in the US is a factor in the history of the Grail in this country. Since the 60's it has been quite natural for there to be women attracted to Grail values and vision who come from different cultural backgrounds, including economic and religious/spiritual. Some Grail members left the Catholic Church and stayed on as Grail members welcomed by the movement. As this diversity/pluralism grew, so did the challenge of finding ways to describe US Grail spirituality, and to express it in ritual. There have been years of working to find and share respect among us for women who are Catholic and women who are not. This long experience of struggling with the implications of diversity/pluralism within the US Grail has created a movement sensitive to openness to the sources of our spirituality that we bring to our work together. There is a deep spirituality present among us, which is the source of our work for justice, peace, and ecological sustainability, and of our expression in the arts and ritual. God, the mystery of our lives, the holy, the divine, are ways that different individuals describe this source. This is ongoing work for the future.

In the US, there are many individuals living widely apart. There are some groups that meet regularly. Kate and Mary Gene are part of those who interact nationally and internationally but don’t have a regular local group. About 80 out of 240 members attend a national meeting, traveling great distances once a year. There is national solidarity help for travel for those who need it. There is a list serve in which individuals share issues and offer suggestions for social action in areas of Grail concern. Many of these are directly connected with work to counteract the negative cultural influences of the United States. Finding common work to unite around is something we think will be ahead for us in the next years. The ongoing quest for new and younger members continues.
SMALL GROUP: DEVLINS AND WHITE

In Ireland, the Grail explorers group started meeting when the economic and religious ground was already shifting under our feet. There hadn’t been a Grail in Ireland in the Boom time. The women who have stayed with us are happy with ritual and community, supporting each other in the work most do in areas of social action and education. The thing that’s been remarkable in the Irish group is the acceptance of the significant religious/spiritual diversity: when individuals speak from their own vision and spirituality, everyone is completely relaxed. The need for more members continues, and understanding the implications of being part of an international movement is happening now and will continue.

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4. Do you have any further comments or observations?

We appreciated the paper of Sara Jona and found ourselves stimulated by her assertion that we lack the attitude needed to break down the walls that obstruct human relationships.

There have been many years of members being critical in parts of the Grail, and perhaps we have not yet broken the habit of speaking about the negative first, and only then something positive.

Something that strikes us is the age of people when they came to the Grail. In the US, the early years of the Year School at Grailville saw wonderful charismatic people attracting many young women. For the young it was often transformative to belong to something like this. But this kind of experience hardly exists anywhere any more. It’s time now to find other ways of being together, celebrating together and working together.

Sometimes we hear people speaking of the past, mourning that time of such “complete” unity of all aspects of life, etc. But is some of that not a form of nostalgia? We were all young then and full of enthusiasm and idealism. Do people sometimes theologize about what are simply the inevitable changes time, and the society around us, bring to us?

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We used the Colored Cards as our “consciousness raising” activity

Carol – the more you look, the more you see. At first the bottom one looks like it is uniform. But when you look more closely, you see that the radii are not the same. Top one likewise reveals more patterns as you study it. These pictures show us we have to keep looking! That’s one of the issues in Sara’s piece: “Within the Grail are we walking together?” If we’re going to walk together we have to keep looking at each other, looking at what the other person is nourished by, even if it’s not your own thing. We have to keep learning, with a great respect.

Kate: The bottom one reminds me of yin and yang. I really didn’t like the top one at first but began to see patterns in both the colors and shapes – not very regular ones but even so there are patterns. I also noticed that the bottom one is easier to look at yet has just as many colors. Also the differences are more isolated. There’s more elbow poking in the top card. So: one of the things we bemoan is that we don’t live together any more – much less elbowing – only once a year….

MG – the top one made me feel upset. I didn’t have much patience with searching out the individual parts. I was surprised to hear what Carol and Kate had found in it. I gave up pretty fast. The bottom one: I was struck by so many differences but ordered in such a way that I could take it in. There is beauty in something that might suggest a sort of “dance of difference” – and this is what I think of with the word plurality. To me, the top one suggests diversity with no unifying theme to it.
SMALL GROUP: DEVLINS AND WHITE

We have come through an era where we talked about diversity – starting in the late sixties – “How much diversity can we bear? Can we live with?” But this puts the emphasis on how we are different. Pluralism is about how we’re different and alike - sometimes not exactly the same. There is a longing for the past when it seemed like we shared everything, and it was all the same. But even when we were all going to communion in the oratory or singing at a meeting, what were we all thinking? Was there ever a past when we were truly the same?

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What’s left over is: what is that elusive thing that we share, and that we recognize in each other across every kind of cultural divide (e.g., generational styles and traditions, ethnic/family customs that continue to be passed along in families, songs and poetry and music from our particular musical heritage, which may include nationalist/patriotic material, too.) These riches are often repositories of strong memories and powerful emotions that bind us deeply to those who have gone before both in our families and in our Grail. Surely the Grail customs and traditions enable us to feel connected as Grail?

We need to work on an atmosphere where nobody feels threatened by other people’s way of doing things (not just spiritual); we have to accept that others have other ways, but their having them doesn’t threaten my way.

Finally Carol reminded us that she still thinks the concept of “tribe” might be a better image than “community” with which to think of the Grail connection between those of us from different cultures. This came to her when she visited South Africa some years ago, and again when she read When Things Fall Apart by Chinua Achebe. She was greatly impressed by the degree of loyalty and commitment that existed within immediate families, but also the fidelity and commitment that is taken for granted in tribal connections. These bonds are different from family bonds, but still people from the same tribe expect certain things from each other, owe allegiance to each other. And everyone in a tribal culture has learned these unwritten beliefs and rules. Observing them is both respecting yourself and respecting your relationships.

MARY HELEN ADLER October 2, 2010

Commentary on Marian Ronan’s paper – “Culture and Spiritual Challenges for International Grail Movement”.

We know that pre-colonial imperialistic culture was forced on conquered nations by Western wars and educational and health groups. Worship too was translated and enforced by western missionaries. We know now the post colonial cultures are being rejected in favor of the original cultures of the colonized with wars, revolutions and worshippers bringing back their native liturgies and faith celebrations.

Marian seems to understand that it is impossible to create a common culture in the Grail all over the world; just as countries have varied cultures and ways to worship. Thinking back to the “elder Grail” training of the 40’s and 50’s, we were trained to be COUNTER CULTURE as to life style; choice of service; social justice consciousness to identify with the poor as Christ did and taught us to do. The aesthetic culture in the GRAIL movement in the USA continues to enrich all new members.
MARY HELEN ADLER

Each GRAIL GROUP IN ALL GRAIL COUNTRIES WILL HAVE ITS OWN AESTHETIC; not in common as before because they will develop their own choices within the culture of their particular country. The new members will create their own programs based on their country’s individual culture. The one COMMON VALUE the Western country Grail movement members could contribute to the other Grail groups throughout the international movement can be TO TEACH COUNTER CULTURE LIFESTYLES, COUNTER MATERIALISTIC VALUES, which in itself is a SPIRITUAL CHALLENGE and leads to spiritual awareness of what life is all about.

All spiritual leaders; all ethical leaders; all who are naturalists hope all those who follow their way will choose wisely to embrace a simple lifestyle no matter which country they live in and living in the USA gives us a constant challenge to live simply and to identify with the thousands and millions all over the world who are forced to live in poverty through no fault of their own.

JUDITH BLACKBURN

Question 1
Strongest cultural influences as I see them:

- Consumerism and a high level of “felt needs” for physical comfort and personal autonomy
- Yearning for community in spite of the above
- Discouragement, even helplessness, about the state of the world & politics in the U.S.
- For many – fear of poverty, crime, terrorism, the “other”
- Disenchantment of institutions (the church, the schools, the courts, etc.)
- There is a growing awareness of a shift in consciousness in understanding the basis of spirituality and social action
- Mainstreaming of “causes” such as feminism, anti-racism, tolerance—without really understanding the issues and differences underlying discrimination

Questions 2 & 3
Ways the spirituality of my Grail grouping has been affected:

- What is my Grail group? The Council? Membership Team? Southwest?
- Assuming the whole Grail as “my group” as a result of the Council being my main affiliation, I see that
  1) We continue to attract members because we represent a kind of counter-cultural approach to consumerism and apathy.
  2) Many members follow a spiritual path outside of the institutional church, and those who stick with Catholicism sometimes feel misunderstood.
  3) There have been some attempts to “catch Grail members” up with new developments in spirituality and consciousness, such as introducing Integral Theory through programming and at national gatherings.
  4) Because of spiritual diversity within our ranks, we have had difficulty knowing how to worship together, yet the Grail has a long tradition of creating rituals and ceremonies.
  5) Social action has been minimized except for the actions of individuals as individuals while we take a breather in this transition toward a new way of thinking of social action from the inside out.

Question 4
Additional Comments:

I think the Mayan Calendar tells us that a new age is coming in around 2012, and we are in the beginnings of that change (see discussion of “the shift” above). Yet our U.S. Grail is an aging group. Most of our members, wonderful as they are, carry the energy of the past century—and our challenge will be to recruit and listen to the realities of younger women.
JOY GARLAND

What are the strongest cultural influences present in your country today?
- Consumerism/Materialism.
- Influence on money
- buying politicians, buying elections
- Rule by Corporations
- Monopoly on media control – Murdock, Fox
- Fundamentalism – Red States/Blue States
- Gay rights
- Immigration
- Rise of women
- Poor education quality
- Increasing sex, violence, language and crudity
- Hunger and poverty = joblessness
- Polarization
- Anti-Islam
- Rising Atheism

In what ways has the spirituality of your Grail group shifted over recent times and what do you see as the major challenges for the future?
- Catholic, Christians, Few Jews, Agnostics and non-believers—but shared justice concerns and human rights,
- Prayer and ritual de-emphasizing
- Christian language substituting words
- Challenge in use of time mementos
- See – Judge – Act

Do you have any further comments of observations?
Are we also de-emphasizing the reality and importance of the power of prayer and faith?

Under Consciousness – raising exercises:
Shape your Culture - Discussion
What do we see as the main cultural influences impacting on our society today, and which will continue to affect it strongly over the next few years?
- The traditional role of women as primarily homemakers- rise in professors and business and political life; information and technical rise- fall in industrial factory jobs. Film and media ethics being looser – sex, violence, vulgarity.

Shape your Culture - Discussion (cont.)
Story Telling: Do you have an example from your own life of that of your Grail Group about handling diversity/plurality? Could you tell the story?
- The sense of sharing a common vision/call and source of strength – Holy Spirit/Sacraments. The sense that God or the Spirit would work through us individually and as a movement to transform ourselves and the world to be more just, compassionate, more loving, in building a kind of peace, plenty and beauty on Earth for all creation.
  1. Laura Kaplan
  2. Cornwall Religious Diversity Weekend – Native American, Muslim?
     Work of early Grail – Contributing and change in liturgy, hymns, first day celebrations, advent wreath, praying the psalms.
     Loss of structure, Decision Making? Let’s elect!!!
BETH WASMER

I was not able to get together to discuss with Judith my closest Coloradan but I did read the papers and did the exercise by myself and in my way. I know this is not exactly the way we wish us to do it but I wanted to let you know that I was participating in my way. I so appreciated Mary Gene’s note to the movement that I felt compelled to share a little of my response.

I felt very comfortable with Sara Jona’s move from diversity to plurality. As I feel the Grail in the USA is very much one of a plurality of members that at once comfort us and challenge us as we are asking ourselves who are we now? I think another plurality that we might not see as the beautiful flower in the garden that it is is our generational plurality, yes we are aging and yet we have many generational friendships that also add to the plurality in the garden.

I know it will seem a shock to some but our plurality in the Grail also includes a religious plurality that threatens some and enlivens others. The strength of an inter-religious or spiritual plurality of members is, I think a world peace tool that is unstoppable. If we can be together as one with many spiritual bases that we don’t let the fear forces try and shred the unity by pitting doctrines and belief system against each other we become a very powerful force for peace in the world. That is my hope, belief, prayer.

Maybe that is our path in our diversity and plurality and respect and belief in the equality of all of our sisters and their cultures we come together and let no wall divide us and in that wave of strength we go forward working daily for peace and justice for all in the world. And how do we do this? How do I do this? What is our daily action?

It has to be more than talk. We must together discover the walk of our talk together.

Hope all my sisters are well, thanks for listening.... share away.
TXINTXA: PAPER 2: U.S. GRAIL RESPONSES – IN ADDITION TO REVISION 1

GROUP RESPONSES

BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS October 20, 2010

On October 20th, the following Boston Grail members met to discuss Txintxa II, Katie Sellers, Pam Cobey, Mary Farrell, Anne Hurley, Monica Maher, Beth Rosen, TRose Holdcraft and Carol Siemering.

We used the questions, the article from Sara Jonas and Marian Ronan to stimulate our discussion

1. What are the strongest cultural influences present in your country today?

The impact of 911 on security and on anti-Muslim sentiment.

Individualism.

The media, social networking, Internet & instant connectivity, internet activism, transnational activist networks.

We live in a culture of debt, expectation of cheap goods, wanting goods now--culture of addiction, acquisition and consumerism (trying to meet our spiritual desire through acquisition of goods).

Neocolonialism, globalization, outsourcing with loss of jobs and manufacturing in US, hierarchy of market and corporate culture with growing sense of powerlessness among masses, culture of business, inescapably corporate, consumerist.

Loss of credibility in structure of Catholic church in Boston.

Future orientation among younger population, culture of distraction and over stimulation (tied to social networking).

The younger generation is more open/less prejudiced in terms of race and Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgendered rights.

"Spiritual but not religious" youth, short memory (we don't value history and received multi-generational wisdom but, rather, try to constantly innovate and recreate ourselves; this tends toward a rootless identity).

Multiculturalism, human rights, social justice.

2. In what ways is the spirituality of your Grail grouping being affected/challenged by these cultural influences?

Respect for growing plurality. Growing plurality changes the group. We are deeply pluralistic in our spiritualities and religious praxes. In many ways I think our diversity is indicative of American culture and at its best offers a beautiful opportunity for sharing across traditions, beliefs, and practices. We have such a great opportunity for growth and learning from one another-- engaging religious and spiritual particularities. It's an energizing group to be a part of.

3. In what ways has the spirituality of your Grail group shifted over recent times and what do you see as the major challenges of the future?

Individuals' spiritual journeys have shifted and continue to shift, but the group holds the plurality.

In recent years new members with strong Jewish and Christian/Catholic identities have joined the group, bringing new opportunities for deepening theological dialogue. As one of those new members, I feel time and opportunity has limited our ability to really tap opportunities for spiritual discussions, though we had one particularly positive and powerful experience when celebrating Passover together this year. I hope this inspires similar more conversations in the future.
4. Do you have any further comments or observations?

Using the ideas from Marian Ronan's paper, the whole notions of "fracture" and "alliance" when the question was asked "Is a woman celebrating Mass as a positive goal where we want to go?" in the sense of how inclusive that may or may not be. A response was that in the Grail in the U.S. (and for that matter the international Grail) we have a wonderful opportunity to acknowledge our "fractures" the places where we are not the same and in fact sometimes opposite and at the same time create "alliances"-- standing together. So that those sisters who claim Jesus Christ as the central mystery of their lives can stand shoulder to shoulder with those who may not even be able to give a name to the "infinite everything", the "Holy". That these alliances worked on in the Grail can be a light shining to the rest of the world where religion fractures and causes war, prejudice, xenophobia.

We spoke of the "cultures" (and here I mean it as Alison Healy expressed at the Spirituality Forum--Culture is a system or set of meanings, values, models and patterns, incorporated in or underlying the actions and communications of the life of one specific human group or society. This system or set is consciously or unconsciously lived and assumed by the group as the expression of its own human identity and reality. This system or set is learned (it is not a biological inheritance) and passes from generation to generation, whether received directly as it is or changed by the group itself'. Marcello Azevedo, SJ) of different Grail groups even in the US. Quite different, all wonderful, all with a particular way of being, sharing. Some of our groups are all Catholic, some with a very diverse way of touching the Holy. Even the parts of the country we come from defines how we speak to one another, how we listen, even what we find funny. And I for one, sometimes am not on the top of my game when it comes to remembering not everyone everywhere thinks, talks, believes as I do.

As a young theology student at a catholic Jesuit school, who does ministry with young women, I KNOW there is a deep spiritual longing in my generation -- one that is not filled by the norm of American culture. I think there is a wealth of wisdom, spiritual commitment and women's leadership in the Grail that can and does speak to American women today, and I am excited to pursue ways to engage them in conversation and spiritual journeying through the Grail.

*US Culture - *Grail Community - huge contribution to make especially to emerging women generation (bombarded with consumer pressures as promise of happiness) in providing an alternative culture with values in tune with rest of Earth's population.... harmony with nature, ancestors, spirit world, other human beings.

*Challenge to Grail - to be open and flexible to increasing diversity of membership, which reflects diversity of our Earth... not just by class, nation, sexual orientation but especially race/ethnicity and religion/spirituality. This is both a challenge and a great opportunity for the Grail....to model a community which thrives in its mega-diversity and finds its strength in its multi-religiosity.

*Possible directions - increased training for membership in multi-religious diversity (ie Paul Knitter approach for Catholics/Christians) and in non-violent communication (Rosenberg) and/or Alternatives to Violence Program (AVP of Quakers) in order to embrace differences (all of these trainings have expert facilitators in NYC area)
Questions for “Txintxa”…..International Grail October 2010
(By Emme Normadin and Ria de Groot in Stockton California)

1. **What are the strongest cultural influences in your country today?**
   - multi-culturalism and especially strong in our city...105 languages spoken
   - consumerism....based on societal pressures
   - isolationism...so many folks not feeling a part of the community
   - a hurry up culture....feeling of lack of time
   - a culture dominated by a corporate world (corporations having the power)
   - multi-denominational and many non churched people

2. **In what ways is the spirituality of your Grail grouping being affected?**
   - We are multi-denominational and also some non-churched yet spiritual
   - varied spiritual practices and beliefs
   - It takes making a decision to eliminate/reduce distractions in our lives and to focus ...on things spiritual...also to make time for our spiritual reflections and growth
   - for some members the Grail is their major “spiritual home”
   - since we live apart from each other...one hour to two hours and one three hours of driving away from each other, it takes some planning to get together

3. **In what ways has the spirituality of your Grail group shifted over recent times and what do you see as the major challenges of the future?**
   - The biggest shift has been that the majority members of our Grail group are in their late sixties and early seventies. A few still hold jobs and are very busy with that and in one case being pregnant and raising her two year old son. One is in a nursing home.
   - I would say that practicing Catholics are in the minority at this point
   - We are all spiritually rich, inter-denominational or non-churched....this is our strength and it might be considered a challenge but I do not think that we experience it as a great difficulty. There is great “kinship” in being Grail...also as women and as human beings with many similar values.
   - Direct action projects seem to be a challenge ... (As a Grail group) Each of us are involved in other groupings where we are active.... I think that the physical distances between us pose an obstacle in that regard

4. **Other observations:**
   - Our “Grail Kinship” and spirituality seems to flourish
   - The differences in expression of our new or old spiritual traditions can be perceived as gift when experienced with a sense of “kinship”
   - Rituals I am not familiar with (not so comfortable perhaps) I often experience as refreshing and strengthening