CULTURAL CHANGES AND SPIRITUAL CHALLENGES

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTIONS

1. What are the strongest cultural influences present in your country today?
   - Wife inheritance
   - Tribalism
   - Impunity
   - Gender inequality
   - Nepotism
   - Inculturation
   - Circumcision
   - Family and work/employment ties

2. In what ways is the spirituality of your Grail grouping being affected/challenged by these cultural influences?
   - Killing of vocation
   - Tribalism/nepotism makes us not to develop or grow because we are team centeredness
   - Lack of transparency and accountability among the members hence kills the growth and development of the group and then spirit goes down.

3. In what ways has the spirituality of your group shifted over recent times?
   It has moved from active participation to passive because of the family ties, employment, lack of commitments and a sign of giving no priority to the Grail activities.

Major challenges for the future
   - Life choices / styles in the Grail
   - Communication barriers and networking
   - Economic status of the Grail members
   - Rigidity of some Grail members
Cultural influences impacting on our society today

- Wife inheritance
- Tribalism/language
- Impunity
- Nepotism
- Cultural initiations

THE ABOVE CIRCLE SHOWS THE INFLUENCES THAT ARE DYING OUT

Spiritual Challenges being faced by our Grail

- Ecumenism
- Community life/ living
- Grail criteria
- Grail Life styles

Cultural influences having an impact on the world now and will continue to affect it strongly over the next years

- Gender inequality
- Circumcision
- Inculturation
- Corruption
- Patriarchal society
THE CIRCLE BELOW SHOWS THE INFLUENCES HAVING AN IMPACT ON THE WORLD NOW AND WILL CONTINUE TO AFFECT IT STRONGLY OVER THE NEXT YEARS

- Corruption
- Inculturation
- Circumcision
- Patriarchal
- Gender inequality
1. What are the stronger culture influences present in your country today?

A: Mozambique is an intense cultural mosaic, therefore the culture influences are the most varied. Talking only about the most significant, it is worth mentioning that more than 10 ethnic groups of Mozambicans and people of Portuguese, Pakistani, Indian and other origins live together in the country. It is also important to highlight that countrywide, and in spite of the big cultural interaction, the majority of the ethnic groups continues to make initiation ceremonies. Currently the main influences come from neighboring countries (South Africa, Zimbabwe, Malawi and Tanzania), Portugal, Pakistan, India, Brazil, USA, depending, in general, on the cultural aspect referred to: “lifestyle”, gastronomy, music, dance, religion, handicraft, etc. For instance in big cities, the lifestyle is very much marked and/or influenced by the American and South-African “lifestyles”, by glossy magazines and TV series that have resulted in the emergence of a middle class with ostensive postures.

In restaurants, the gastronomy is essentially influenced by Portuguese and Indian cuisine. The “more Mozambican” gastronomy has been gaining its space but it is still insignificant. We can also find some influence of Chinese and Italian gastronomy.

As it is evident, in border areas there is direct influence of neighboring countries. From Brazil, in particular, there is a long-dated presence of its music, sitcoms, clothing and lately of the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God and other evangelical churches.

In general in religious terms, essentially the animist (traditional) religions interact with Islamism and Christianity. Here there is a sort of an extraordinary “incorporation”! The South of the country has essentially suffered an influence of Protestant churches and of the Catholic Church; on its side the North has had a major influence from Islamism and Catholicism. These influences interrelate with the influences of the traditional medicine that many times involves the belief in the powers of certain minds and spirits over others. The intimate, umbilical link with the ancestors is always present, living together with other beliefs and incorporating them.

2. In which ways the spirituality of your Grail group has been affected/challenged by those cultural influences?

A: In the Grail group in Mozambique, we are mostly catholic. There are only two (2) non-catholic Christians. We come from various ethnic groups and have been learning with each another. In our meetings we talk about customs and / or usages practiced by each one of us with regard to beliefs, symbolisms and rites, particularly those related to special moments of life: for instance birth, marriage and death. In our celebrations we include various symbolisms that illustrate this cultural diversity that each one of us carries. Throughout our journey, we have made an exercise of trying to find the common basis that unites us in terms of faith. We came to the conclusion that we all have one God, Mother and Father, we believe in another life after death, and we believe in our union with our ancestors, i.e., with those who preceded us and became a reference in our lives. Up till now within the Grail, we all believe in Jesus Christ, God with the Father and with the Holy Spirit.

3. In which ways the spirituality of your Grail group has changed in recent times and what do you think are the main challenges for the future?
A: The Spirituality of the group hasn’t changed; nonetheless we are always open to discuss it. This exercise also made us make an individual and collective inner reflection about the basis of our faith. We have been discussing the difference between faith, religion and church.

TXINTA FASE II – REFLEXÕES SOBRE MUDANÇAS CULTURAIS E DESAFIOS ESPÍRITUAIS

1. Quais são as influências culturais mais fortes presentes no vosso país hoje?

R: Moçambique é um intenso mosaico cultural, pelo que as influências culturais são as mais variadas. Falando só das mais significativas, importa referir que convivem no país mais de 10 grupos étnicos de moçambicanos e pessoas de origem portuguesa, paquistanesa, indiana, entre outras. Importa realçar que pelo país afora, e apesar da grande interacção cultural, a grande maioria dos grupos étnicos continua a realizar as cerimónias de ritos de iniciação. Actualmente as principais influências vêm dos países vizinhos (África do Sul, Zimbabwe, Malawi e Tanzânia), de Portugal, do Paquistão, da Índia, do Brasil, dos Estados Unidos da América, dependendo, em geral, de que aspecto cultural se está a falar, se do “estilo de vida”, da gastronomia, da música da dança, de religião, de artesanato, etc. Nas grandes cidades, por exemplo, o estilo de vida é muito marcado e/ou influenciado pelo “lifestyle” americano e sul-africano, pelas revistas e séries televisivas cor-de-rosa, e que tem resultado no surgimento de uma classe burguesa com posturas ostensivas. Nos restaurantes, a gastronomia anda essencialmente a volta dos pratos de influência portuguesa e indiana. A gastronomia “mais moçambicana” vai tendo alguma implantação pública, mas ainda pouco significativa. Pode-se encontrar também a influência de alguma gastronomia chinesa e italiana. Nas zonas fronteiriças, como é evidente, sente-se directamente a influência dos países vizinhos. Do Brasil, em particular, existe uma implantação antiga da sua música, das novelas, do vestuário e ultimamente da Igreja Universal do Reino de Deus e outras igrejas evangélicas. Em termos religiosos no geral, convivem, essencialmente, as religiões animistas (tradicionais) com o islamismo e o cristianismo. Existe aqui uma espécie de “incorporação” fantástica! O Sul do país sofreu essencialmente uma influência das igrejas cristas protestantes e da igreja católica; o Norte por sua vez, sofreu uma maior influência islâmica e católica. Estas influências convivem com as influências das medicinas tradicionais que envolvem muitas vezes a crença nos poderes de certas mentes e espíritos sobre as outras. A ligação íntima, umbilical com os antepassados está sempre presente, convivendo e incorporando as outras crenças.

2. De que formas é que a espiritualidade do vosso grupo do Graal foi afectada/desafiada por estas influências culturais?

R: No grupo do Graal em Moçambique, somos na grande maioria católicas. Existem somente duas (2) cristãs não católicas. Somos provenientes de diferentes grupos étnicos e temos estado a aprender umas com as outras. Nos nossos encontros, falamos dos costumes e/ou hábitos vividos por cada uma no que se refere a crenças, simbolismos e rituais, particularmente relacionados com momentos
especiais da vida: por exemplo, o nascimento, casamento e a morte. Nas nossas celebrações incluímos diferentes simbolismos que retratam essa variedade cultural que cada uma traz. Durante a nossa caminhada, temos feito um exercício de tentar encontrar a base mínima comum que nos une em termos de fé. Chegamos a conclusão de que todas temos um Deus único, Mãe e Pai, cremos numa outra vida para além da morte e cremos na nossa união com os nossos antepassados ou seja, com aqueles que nos precederam e constituíram referência nas nossas vidas. Até agora, dentro do Graal, cremos todas em Jesus Cristo, Deus com o Pai e com o Espírito.

3. **De que formas é que a espiritualidade do vosso grupo do Graal se alterou em tempos recentes e o que consideram ser os principais desafios para o futuro?**

R: A espiritualidade do grupo não se alterou, mas ficamos abertas à questão. Este exercício, levou-nos também a uma reflexão interior individual e colectiva sobre o fundamento da nossa fé. Temos vindo a discutir a diferença entre fé, religião e Igreja.
TXINTXA 2 RESPONSES SOUTH AFRICA

10 November 2010

Group 1 in Johannesburg, (Ines/ Frankie /Emilia)

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

South Africa has been left with the scars of 300 years of misrule. The oppression reached its peak during the 40 years of the apartheid regime, the legacy of which still remains, affecting the present dispensation.

A. Problems which influence the culture and the context negatively

1. There has been an increase in poverty with consequent deterioration in living conditions. It is greatest in the black Population, but is also manifest in all other groups. About 60% altogether. South Africa has the second highest income gap in the world (Gini Co-efficient).

Great inadequacies exist as regards:

- Income: many persons and families with low or no income live below the poverty line.
- Employment: high percentage of persons without jobs, including young adults and recent school leavers. There is a lack of skills ...
- Housing: a general shortage; great numbers live in shacks in informal settlements; many street homeless people.
- Family life: disrupted by previous migrant labour system, inadequate housing, single-sex hostels for contract workers, a dearth of male role-models, domestic violence, absent fathers, single parents, teenage pregnancies, newly born babies abandoned in hospitals and fields despite legal abortion and child grants
- Health: low income results in inadequate nutrition; many medical facilities, hospitals and clinics are insufficiently equipped due to poor funding and theft, have staff shortages, some insufficiently trained nurses, largely due to closing of many nursing colleges since 1994 ...
- Education: many poorly qualified teachers and many poorly equipped schools as a result of the inadequate education system during apartheid, and there is not yet a culture of education.
- Welfare: while social grants are available, there is a serious shortage of social workers

Unfortunately, the helping professions do not attract a sufficient number of new recruits at present.
Other serious social problems linked to poverty:

- HIV/AIDS has led to the early death of thousands of adults, young adults and children, due to many years of government denialism. This has left innumerable orphans and child-headed families who live in even greater poverty. South Africa has the highest rate in the world of people living with HIV/AIDS.

- Crime committed by many people in order to survive

- Problems are compounded by: patriarchy, the lowly status of women, promiscuity and the commodification of sex.

2. The erosion of values resulting from (a) the loss of normal cultural controls and (b) the progressive secularization of society which weakened the influence of religious values. Many social problems are related to the gradual loss of ethnic identity and culture because of assimilation with the oppressive mainstream culture. Thus the ethics and values embedded in indigenous customs have dwindled over the generations. The current problems are increased by the sexual revolution and amoral trends which have resulted in less reverence and respect for life, lack of compassion and concern, of honesty and of self-control. This has left us a society suffering from individualism, greed, xenophobia, violence, substance abuse ...

3. Economic and environmental crisis

The system of unbridled capitalism creates an unequal society and its excesses, continues to ravage the environment, threatening both the social structure and the ecological basis of life. Fortunately, manifestations of climate change and extreme weather conditions have raised awareness in the population about the crisis and its urgency.

Unfortunately governments and corporations are seeking solutions through economic growth. But regrettably, they will not admit that a problem cannot be fixed using the very system that caused it in the first place.

B. Positive influences on the culture and context

- The largely peaceful transition from apartheid to the New South Africa was made possible because of the willingness of both sides to negotiate a truce. The repressive militarised police state ended. The new democratic constitution removed the colour bar, ending all restrictions that had affected our lives from cradle to grave, abrogated capital punishment, entrenched the rule of law, promoted equal opportunity and affirmed the human worth and dignity of all.
• The Truth and Reconciliation Commission - TRC - enabled the growth of a future of peaceful cooperation and reconstruction.

• The country reaped the benefits of the intangible store of goodness, moral capital, because of the altruism and heroism of many leaders and of ordinary people from all level who, over four decades, had worked for justice, peace and reconciliation. Among others these were, Ruth First, Albie Sachs, Braam Fischer, Nelson Mandela, Desmond Tutu, Ahmed Kathrada, Ela Gandhi, Sheena Duncan, Beyers Naude, Albert Geyser, Bernard Spong, Denis Hurley, Helen Joseph, Steve Biko, Cyril Ramaphosa, Mampela Rampele, Barbara Hogan ... Included in this heroic effort was the outstanding work done through organisations like the UDF, ECC, NGOs, SACC, SACBC, Childline, trauma clinics, training in non-violent direct action, Peace Action, Peace Monitors, Institute of Non-violent Conflict Resolution, CSVR (Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation) etc. ...

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

As individuals or groups we grew in a gradual awareness and understanding of the effects of these cultural influences, we realised how deeply affected by these cultural influences and have felt called to respond in various ways. Motivated by the gospel, choices were made according to our different gifts and talents.

• Human development: programmes such as the Training for Transformation approach, PRH Education (Personality and Human Relations), Movement for a Better World, Prayer Programme for women at Grail Centre.

• Development projects in all our South African groupings, mainly for empowerment of women and girls, gender issues and skill training. “Growing To Be”, a life skills training manual for teens, written and published.

• Professional work choices in health, education and welfare sectors.

• Services of all kinds rendered to families, the neighbourhood, at work, in local parishes or congregations by each and every member of our local group, according to her situation.

• Networking with the South African Faith Communities Environment Initiative (SAFCEI)

• Deepening our understanding of issues, by benefitting from the expertise of, e.g SANE (South African New Economics), the Jesuit Institute, the Human Rights Commission, EarthLifeAfrica, etc.
• Working in larger structures of civil society, government and church: e.g. NGOs dedicated to Environment and to Peace, Department of Labour, Medical and Trauma Clinics, Catholic Health Care (CATHCA) ...

We have always been counter-cultural, have never allowed apartheid laws to limit us: we have met, worked and lived in multi-racial situations and have run programmes in the different segregated areas.

**Question 3: In what ways has the spirituality of your Grail group shifted over recent times?**

Originally, women living in Grail Centres usually ran programmes, worked, studied and prayed in the context of the community. In our present context, individuals are involved in a variety of occupations. This has led to divergent timetables. Also, personal needs in the area of study, prayer and reflection vary. Some of these community activities occur on particular occasions, however they no longer form a fixed element of the daily schedule in our region.

The practices that remain are:

• Spiritual deepening every year in the observance and celebration of the feasts and fasts of the liturgical cycle. Participation in the Sunday Liturgy in one’s parish of choice continues to be important.

• Spiritual reading, reflection groups, meditation and retreats.

• The spiritual orientation continues, i.e: the practice of looking at the world, discerning in the light of the gospels and concluding what needs to be transformed, looking at self and deepening of personal relationship with God, then responding to the needs of the time.

• A greater sense of human solidarity – compassion and concern for the world – the joys and sorrows of the human family.

• Ecumenical solidarity and collaboration. The struggle against the injustice of the apartheid system brought people of all faiths together. In ecumenical sensitivity training programmes, people of faith found each other and began working together for change. The support derived from these inter-generational, multi-racial, multi-faith communities proved to be crucial.

We worked, prayed, struggled (and trembled !) together. Anglicans, Calvinists, Catholics, Congregationalists, Hindus, Jews, Lutherans and Presbyterians came out of their ghettos. Strong relationships were created.
We found common ground, contributed from our particular background, were inspired and enriched by our diversity while at the same time remaining rooted and nourished in our own denomination and treasured these unique identities.

**And what do you see as the major challenges for the future?**

- Facilitating reconciliation among and with all groups of the population and all that this entails
- Working for the healing of the nation ... recognizing and understanding the wounds of the past in the population.
- Transcending our own group’s well-being, and working toward meeting the needs of all the people who suffered
t  - deprivation, imprisonment, torture and relatives who ‘disappeared’.
- Continuing to work ecumenically
- Working for the common good and helping others to commit to this
- Getting involved in voter education
- Eliminating racism and xenophobia
- Creating awareness of true values and confronting false values
- As Grail women, reviewing question of being overly committed in various aspect of personal life, e.g. persons, work,
  - parish, other activities ...
- Making more time for being together as Grail
- Making our Grail encounters more life-giving
- Grail formation – initial and ongoing
- Personal growth – accepting that this needs to be an ongoing process
- Dealing with differences creatively
- Examining how we have been affected by living under apartheid, and acknowledging that those of us, in the
  - mainstream culture, were privileged beneficiaries.

**Questions 4: Do you have any further comments or observations?**

In the process of dealing with this questionnaire, we became acutely aware of the importance of context. Context is the ground in which we live and act. It conditions, determines and colours our lives and informs our choices.

Significant elements of the South African context are:

- Nelson Mandela’s government was an extraordinary blessing and model of diplomacy, tolerance, reconciliation and wise governance which awakened hope in our nation and there have been many incidents and people who have, and still do, embody this vision. Sadly, these tolerant attitudes and practices have not altogether been maintained by Mandela’s successors. Since 1998 we have been
left with a spiritual and psychological malaise. While there have been the greatest positive changes in South Africa, i.e. the overthrowing of the apartheid state and the liberation of the people, we have been left with the scars of 300 years of misrule. There has been a wonderful transformation but 16 years later, for most of the population, there has been little change in their situation. The masses have not had their expectations fulfilled. They are still poor; many live in shacks, lack basic services, cannot find employment, and suffer many of the social ills that beset our society. They are now beginning to express their dissatisfaction. The reasons for this lack of progress can be attributed to poor governance. Those presently in positions of leadership are not concentrating on the urgent needs of the nation because they seem to be caught up in reacting to their experiences of colonialism and racism. Instead of responding to real needs, getting the right people to do the work, their decisions are flawed because they favour inefficient deployees over properly qualified contractors.

- Many of these problems arise out of the past and many can be traced to poor governance, both past and present, and lack of political will. People who have little or no experience or preparation or skills in the field they are tasked with have been deployed to posts in government departments and civil service, replacing white experts who were prematurely retired or retrenched. The motivation for the dismissal of these experts stems from the understandable anti-white attitudes of the new leadership.

  In government and big business we find a culture of self-enrichment, cronyism, nepotism, entitlement and pervasive corruption.

  There are undercurrents which threaten democracy and the rule of law and even now, draconian legislation is planned to prevent access to and reporting of information on politicians, corporations, environment, service delivery, etc. regarding actual facts relevant to the state of the nation. The real reason for this legislation is to maintain the ruling ANC party in power.

- The greatest handicap and threat to democracy is the fact that at present South Africa is practically a one party state. The governing party has an overwhelming majority. The opposition parties are very small and wield little power.

  The understanding of democracy is limited to the right to vote. There is no proper expectation of accountability to the voters. Most people vote out of loyalty to the party of the liberation movement, or are seduced by empty election promises. Those who are dissatisfied and who cannot
bring themselves to vote for any other political party, do not vote at all, leaving the unsatisfactory situation with all its problems to continue as usual.

**Reflection**

When we consider reconciliation and the healing of past wounds, one of the greatest tasks is restoring dignity.

White people have been beneficiaries, and we need to acknowledge this, because where we received, others were deprived. This is a journey of insight and understanding. This raises the question of restitution. It is not only a material restoration - making good, giving back – like affirmative action. It is a process of restitution, of restoring dignity. All of this is part of reconciliation. Another process is forgiveness. These are all deeply spiritual processes, as well as community movements.

When I think of the new power groups, I wonder how they can learn from our mistakes, inconsistencies and wrongdoing, and how, in their turn, they can be sensitive to situations where they may become beneficiaries at the cost of others. I think of a lack of sufficient awareness in the process of becoming enriched, as in the case of “tender-preneuring.” I also think of Grail people and many of those who have been involved in what appears to me, to be largely processes of restitution. These are people doing great and generous healing.

The following South African authors have been concerned with work in healing, reconciliation and transformation:


Wilhelm Verwoerd

Charles Villa-Vincencio (J De Gruchy and Verryn)

Brandon Hamber

**GROUP 2**

**CULTURAL AND SPIRITUALITY CHALLENGES**

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

   - materialism and capitalism resulting in greed, egoism;
   - the good of African culture – family values, respect, caring for the neighbour or elderly, is often eroded by greed and selfishness of youth - lack of family cohesion - and yet it shines through in many ‘child-headed’ households where teenagers have to care for younger siblings when parents have died of AIDS or are absent for other reasons;
confusion in customs – eg traditional labola and wedding preparations and perceived need for ‘western’ style wedding - causing great expense and indebtedness;

religious fundamentalism – eg Pentecostals – riches are result of ‘good’ life, there is no answer for those who remain poor;

culture of death – weekly funerals as result of violence, HIV/AIDS and other illnesses;

2 In what ways is the spirituality of your Grail group being affected and challenged by these cultural influences?

• there is a deep thirst for spiritual nourishment in our members but economic, family and other demands prevent many from giving it sufficient space in their lives
• hard to find suitable time for meaningful Grail events
• thirst in some for quiet but find ‘silence’ difficult to maintain – eg prayer day – we are too ‘busy’ within and around ourselves and we can’t give quality time for cultivating silence
• we think it important to ask one another within the local Grail group what would nourish your spirituality and then find ways of making that possible
• why have we not had a Grail ‘retreat’ for a number of years

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

• some of us are pursuing some forms of spiritual nourishment outside of the Grail group either as individuals or a few of us together, eg reading/study group of inspirational books; monthly or weekly quiet reflection led by other groups;
• we wondered whether our Gauteng group might chose the theme of spirituality for the coming year and plan each month’s meeting with appropriate inspiration so as to deepen and broaden our spiritual quest;
• we would like to discuss Marion Ronan’s image of the shattered Grail cup and what that means for us who are in the Grail and want it to remain a Christian organisation.

Pauline Cuzen, Sue Armstrong, Ann Moore, Loek Goemans. Johannesburg, September and October 2010

Group 3

Pretoria/Ekurhuleni Group

Main Cultural influences impacting on our society today and which will continue to affect it strongly over the next few years:

• Community building/trust building is dying out (out)
• Time and energy to give and receive feedback dying out (out)
• Job demands swallowing people’s time and energy (in)
• Less and less opportunity for ‘cross-pollination’ between haves and have-nots (in)
• Limited use of indigenous languages (out)
• No longer preparing and sharing our indigenous foods (Gauteng) (out)
• Less and less parenting (out)
• No longer using home remedies as we did (out)
• Strong resistance to transformation in most quarters (in)
• More and more use of technology is both positive and negative (in)
• The economic situation is influencing the culture both positively and negatively for different people linked to the ‘new’ SA dispensation (in)

Cultural influences that we see dying out in our society now or in the next few years:

• The hospitality of the Grail Centre (for a good reason/understandable)
• Less and less dependency on those that were previously perceived as saviours

Main spiritual challenges being faced by our Grail grouping today as a result of the impact of these cultural influences:

• Not much time to share and nourish ourselves as a community
• For some members, participation is limited because of lack of resources to travel to meeting venues
• Not much mutual support available to participate in preparing for spiritual deepening programmes and events

Comments

• To mitigate some of the above constraints efforts are being made to work in small homogeneous groups
• We have become judgemental - when people develop and advance economically, the manifestations thereof are not appreciated.
1. The strongest cultural influences present in our country are several:

A) A maturity of Christianity is to be measured by the degree of which Christianity has taken roots in our culture by everyday events. In times of crisis, e.g. diseases not curable, death of young, no success in life, many Christians revert to the traditional customs for solutions. Although they may be going to church on Sundays, but everyday life they go to worship other gods, which means, Christianity has not Christianised the people. We read that North Africa was a Christian country up to the seventh century, but by the coming of Islam, it was swept away by Islam, today the whole North of Africa, and part of West Africa is Islam, and we hear that Islam want to make whole Africa converted to Islamic! Is this not a challenge?

B. Missionaries regarded African traditions and customs as inferior therefore aimed at eliminating them, replaced by their own, without dialogue. The Gospel which is a key matter of Jesus teaching, was not explained, majority couldn’t read, therefore a true transformation of Jesus teaching only started to bring a new meaning after the VATICAN II. Then 50 years ago, when they introduced the system of small Christian community. This is an exercise, which people are going through, but it hasn’t taken the roots yet. It involves praying together read the word of God and share insights help each other in difficulties and to learn from the steps of the true Christians. We need care in matter of faith, as Christians, not to return to paganisms. Such as:

- Polygamist is opposed to Christianity. Jesus teaches monogamy—one husband with one wife from first human Adam and Eve.
- Belief in witch-craft, in devil worships, using charms, and any other practises which draws people away from their true faith is contrary to Christian way of life.
- Initiating a child to a clan giving a name, and all the rituals connected to the Ceremony, calling upon the ancestor’s blessings etc. Today this ritual is replaced by the sacrament of Baptism. To be born again in the name of the Trinity.
- Initiating youth to adulthood. This was done by collecting all the young between the age of 10-15 years went through strong exercise of female, and male, circumcision of women or men, where they introduced to know the rituals of adulthood. How to care family hood, rituals of death and burial all what was observed important to the clan, they went through an initiation for a certain period. Today this is replaced by school system of education up to time of confirmation.

Also people are aware of women rights, women genital mutilation is to be eliminated completely. But to our Islam brothers and sisters, polygamy and Many tribes here, circumcision is a matter strictly observed. Is this not a big challenge, in considering women rights today?

FORMERLY
C) The culture of having many children in a family, was regarded as a sign of wealth and to be proud of.
Today there is an emphasis on population control, that is less children you have in a family, the better life that family will gain economically and in principal of education. This has resulted many problems in the whole society.

Families aim at having two children or one or not at all. What we are going through is the killing of foetus in the womb. Women are using chemicals not to conceive at all, now we are creating a culture of Death, young women do not see it as a crime. There is no respect of life at all. This is the biggest challenge we are going through. The ideology is spread up to the interior of the country; women are brainwashed when attending clinics in the medical services all over the country.

The killing of human beings before conceived or after birth is a serious crime, yet their conscience is guiltless. This is a social sin, how do we reverse, to respect human life. All creation is God’s.

This extends to the distraction of the environment that is no respect of nature, we are facing the strong drought global warming. We need to create a culture of care to human and environment. Caring of each other in solidarity is a crucial matter.

D) POWER OF MEDIA

There is no human history that had not applied its media, be it non modern, or post modern. As people of this century, we have been influenced by the modern culture, of media. This type of mass media is very strong that even in the centre of far remote rural areas most of the people are aware of it, and applying to its full. The Western culture is very predominant people apply each mode viewed or heard from Westerners, as the proper mode of modernity of this century, what they apply even if not good is acceptable regardless of being unchristian behavior such beauty contest styles, of degrading of one self these destroys the morality of the young due to what is displayed on the TV programs, pictures of pornography, homosexual practices. Some demand human rights as gays and lesbians, use of drugs all these problems are threatening the families and at times cause splits.

Due to the media, people are told that those who came here as missionaries to convert us to Christianity, today in their own churches are not attending services. Their churches are empty, they prefer to attend social activities instead of going to church. Their church goers, are old men and women not the young.

Is this strengthening our Spirituality?

E) Communal life being replaced by individualism and tribalism. As Christians we are invited by our faith in Jesus Christ to be one people, one national, one totality for service of each person this was practiced in the formal times and still is today as a community of family—that extends beyond the family to the village and above the village level. This communal aspect, was a key factor of solidarity to the whole membership. Being a member of a certain tribe was good as long as it doesn’t exclude those of different tribe to create enmity and superiority. We have heard experienced tribes fighting and even to
the point of war. If Tribalism has a mentality of selfishness which judges disapproval of other tribes, it springs from negative cross-ethnics awareness, it is a sign of evil. It is among religious formation centres, it makes impact on social and political life in our countries.

The church attendance is high, but enmity is also strong due to tribalism. If tribalism is a problematic matter even in the church, how do we translate this with the love of God? We pray and trust in the Lord, that these type of segregation will never be experienced in the Grail community. Tribalism is the culture recognized but also it can destroy our Christian roots.

F)Neo-colonialism is deceitful approach to the citizens of our countries-in Africa- Our leaders are inviting investors, and have no idea of nationalism- The land is sold to investors for 100 years lease, leaving the indigenous have no settlement, best land taken.

Poverty is here to stay. We need leaders who have courage to turn the tables upside down (meaning to disagree and reverse)

G)Materialism and consumerism –the affluent have more than they need, the remnants are supplied here, this is culture of the rich to the poor, we don’t know how to control and share equally.

Q2.

Ways that our Spirituality of the Grail grouping being affected, challenged by this cultural influences.

- Culture embraces all modes of life, such as philosophy of life, language, customs, traditions beliefs, social heritage scientific and political binds people together to give us an identity. From our cultural perspective, we are able to recognize our incompleteness, can question our achievement, seek for a new meaning of life. Culture forms us spirituality if we have been given the chance of incarnating, the Word of God fully.

- There is a tendency of borrowing from our elder sisters/brothers of the West; there is a danger of adapting of what is not right, and take values which are foreign. (all that is view on the internet) without being selective.

- Culture determines the life of the people, in the term of religion, and it influences other spheres of education business, politics- Those missionaries came with religion and linked with colonialization. We need to be careful.

- The Word of God (Gospel) is to be taken in its totality, internalized personalized and be practiced by us all, this can eradicate contradictions in relation to people from different Christian background, and tribalism.

- We have to be rooted in our own faith in order to integrate with others.

- We have to keep the essential in our faith, these are: Holy Eucharist, Bible as our guide –Unity within our church, Grail identity-Symbol, continue dialogue with other Christian churches. Respect of our Authority
- To respect diversity within our reality we need to know what we prophesy or proclaim it should be included in our vision statement.
- Those who are very rich, spend half of the national economy to produce weapons of war instead of establishing peace, and serving the poor, which means material gain of wealth, does not mean necessary moral gain. How can we facilitate the equilibrium as solidarity to show God’s love, and abide to God’s commandment.
- To pray and work for a culture that integrates the Gospel as a solution for enlightenment of the people, continue establishing communities as a route of evangelising.
- Engaging in catechesis at schools and any institutions would be answer to some of the problems mentioned above.

Q.3  WHAT HAS SHIFTED SPIRITUALITY

1. Emphasis of community life has been challenged by the way of life, some living single life, no community life and prayer.
2. The vision of the founder Van Ginneken what has remained in reality?
3. The Networks, survival is Global Justices how do we revive?
4. Not attending the annual meeting or retreats, how do we grow together?
5. The renewal of Charismatic is reviewing our spirituality.
6. To study the Bible seriously and discover our roots by study of Church history
   - Dogma of the church (we have not taken time for study)
We are affected by
   - the social, and spiritual problems which are going on in the wide community
8. Globalisation is very distractive and shifts us spiritually.
9. Ecumenism
10. Lack of commitment in the community matters
11. Problems of having fewer women interested in committing themselves in life vocation for the church and the world.
Culture is a broad aspect of humanity that involves the behaviour and beliefs, customs, norms, attitudes and values of a particular ethnic group, tribe or society. It is the sum total of ways of living, built up by a group of people and transmitted from one generation to another. However, overtime and with interaction of different people from different cultures, changes occur in culture, hence the fact that culture is ever evolving. Culture is therefore never static, but keeps on absorbing new beliefs and behaviour and drops some originally held.

It is upon this background, therefore, that cultural changes pose great challenges to the spirituality of people in general. In this case the dilemma lies in balancing cultural changes with spiritual challenges. This brings people at cross roads, whether to adhere to their dominant cultural practices that have shaped their background or to take the new direction of spirituality. However when two cultures come into contact, the dominant culture may override the weaker culture hence absorbing or eliminating the weaker culture. It follows naturally therefore, that culture is dynamic; always evolving, absorbing new ways of behaviour and shading off some archaic ones, and this phenomenon poses great changes on spirituality of any given group of people in this world, the Grail being no exception.

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

   (a) **Marriage / Matrimony Ceremonies**
   
   Marriage forms the basic unit of a society which is a family. The Marriage ceremony culturally involved many activities beginning with the introduction of the would be groom to the bride’s parents. The girl is given away to the groom in the presence of relatives of both families and marriage is said from that time to have been cemented, this is made for parents to know each other and bless their children. Culturally this is much respected and in many cases church will never bless the marriage if this ceremony did no take place. The bride price is in form of money, cows, goats, or property and other gifts given to the parents of the bride. This cultural practice is very much respected to date in Uganda and without it; marriage will never be respected and recognized by both families of the bride and groom.

   (b) **Burial ceremonies and funeral rites**
   
   It is a cultural practice in many parts of the country to respect the dead and give the departed member of the family a honourable farewell. Death therefore, brings relatives, friends and neighbours together to share that moment of grief. Many times close relatives stay longer to sort out issues related to the deceased.

   (c) **Last Funeral rites**
   
   This is a rite performed some time after the burial. Depending on whether the deceased left a will or not, a heir will be identified and showed to the family, relatives and community members as a sign of new life. In absence of a will the members of the clan will choose one. This is still a strong cultural practice in many parts of the country.

   (d) **Initiation rituals**
   
   In some parts of the country, there is still strong practice of initiation into the adult hood for recognition as a true member of the clan or tribe in general. The common initiation cultural practice is circumcision for both male and females in the Eastern part of the country.
e) Naming of children

Naming of children is an important ritual whereby a child born should be taken to his/her grandparents to be given a name. Many years back several rites would be performed with this ritual. This is important especially for those who take on clan names so that they are not given names of people who were not exemplary in community.

f) Cultural leaders and cultural values

In our country, we treasure our cultural leaders and the love given to them is natural. When a cultural leader says something all the people under him will abide. This at times brings a conflict between the central government leaders and cultural leaders. These subjects in these cultural institutions have particular ways of behaviour, dressing and language. All these are specifically treasured. One of the main cultural values is entertainment, which is part and parcel of the activities in the institution.

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

These cultural changes have affected us both positively and negatively. Positively in a sense that many of the cultural rituals have been incorporated in the church celebrations making it easy to explain to fellow Christians and appreciating them.

They have also brought growth to us as the Grail group and it enriches the community.

These changes have also kept the group together hence bringing solidarity.

The influence of “life after death” has been incorporated spiritually by continuously praying for the dead and observing their presence.

The above background however poses a challenge of many young women having pressure from their parents to bring dowry home. So this reduces the number of young women wishing to join the Grail even though they are explained to that married women can make good Grail members.

The socio-economic challenge faced by members to look after their parents and relatives, which is a cultural norm. This divides the member’s concentration between their spirituality and their economic needs.

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

- The economy situation has greatly changed over time and needs are so many that time and concentration for prayer has also greatly reduced.
- Community life is also sought less. Many people are becoming individualistic; they want to look after themselves and to cope with the pressure from work.
- Incest is fast consuming the wider community. Many parents are defiling their own children. This is a major challenge for the future.
• Global influences have affected our cultural and spiritual influences for example in the media coverage.

Challenges
• Drug abuse and alcoholism are a great challenge especially for the youth.
• Homosexuality/Lesbianism- these, too, are a big challenge in recent times because in our culture these are a taboo.
• Abortion is another looming challenge. The champions give different reasons forgetting that all the same this is life created by God.
• The economic and social factors today affect the Grail grouping by limiting us from getting new members.
• Those following in the footsteps of the older Grail members are few and the few there may not keep the Grail Vision alive. Therefore there is a problem of continuity.

4. Further comments and observations
• There is a challenge of donor funding and strings attached. This has many times made those at the receiving end give up their values and change ideas because of money.
• Balancing of positive cultural practices with spiritual needs.
• Promoting international collaboration in formation programmes
• Initiating sustainable projects for self-reliance is currently being sought.
• Some of the cultural differences affect community living.
Dear Grail Sisters,

I take this opportunity to express my appreciative thank you for all the grail mail that you continue to send to me. I really, really thank you very much for your generosity and love. I want to let you know that I read them and derive a lot of inspirational ideas, challenges, joy and sorrow in our unjust, peace less world. Prayers shared, good will services and good human values are answers to the 21" century. Sadly, we have no answers for the problems we create on ourselves, on others, and on our environment. What really has gone wrong? I ask? God created a beautiful and prosperous world for us to use to our heart’s content and in doing this to glorify and praise him? Are we doing this? Our God is a God of all tongues,, a God in diversity. Hence diversity is a potential gift, and we should use our different tongues, our different colours. It is said no man is an island. How relevant is this saying in today's lifestyles. Everyone matters, so we in the Grail are trying to come to terms, with our connectedness as creatures of the same God- one God.

The past has left scars of "dehumanisation" in the hearts of many. But the past can no longer control our world of today. There is no "small boy" anymore, anywhere. The world has become an open pot, inclusiveness is the fashion the in- thing. In the Grail our vision is to create a spacious centre containing eternal human values where our diversities are nonjudgemental and accepted for what they are. Did Jesus not say, "love me and love one another". The "love one another" supersedes diversity. For me it means love, the divine spark in everybody, and we should make this love full of actions, in everywhere, whatever and however.

In one word inclusiveness. Let me illustrate briefly an incident during my Teacher Training in England (on a Government scholarship). Naturally the British girls were full of questions to ask us Nigerians, about our country etc. One afternoon after a lecture two of them asked me if I had a Tail. My answer to come to my room and I will show you my tail. They followed me. I turned my back to them and then asked did they see my tail? " No" was the answer. I told them that God created all humans alike. He gave them no tails. He created us in his image (unlike animals). This shared

Incident produced laughter, openness and above all understanding. We realised that we had more in common than differences.

The Now is a process we must all take part in making a difference to our global world-what with the illuminations in technology, in discoveries of the oceans, seas, environment and mother earth.

May I conclude with themes from Psalm 146: " Praise the Lord, I tell myself.
I will sing your praises to my Lord as long as I live.
He is the one who made heaven and earth, the sea, and everything in them.

He is the one who keeps every **promise forever, who gives** justice to the oppressed and food to the hungry.  
The Lord frees the prisoners.  
The Lord opens the eyes of the blind.  
The Lord lifts the **burdens of those bent beneath their loads**. The Lord loves the righteous.  
The Lord protects the foreigners among us, he cares for the orphans and widows but he frustrates the plans of the wicked.  
The Lord will reign forever". Amen

May the Lord give us all **(Grail members) the joy of blowing with the** winds of good change.

Much love To Ruth, Anita, Marina, **Mana** Carlos and Deirdre. Yours sisterly,  

Mary Oto Lijadu