TXINTXA 2 RESPONSES ITALY

Synthesis group discussion and plenary

Sunday October 24th we met to answer together to the TXINTXA 2 questions about cultural influences and spiritual challenges for our group in Italy. In two groups we shared individual reflections and in plenary we underlined the common elements. Every group began exchanging about the images presented by Anita Saisi to reflect on plurality and diversity. We discovered in how different ways every one of us can read the same reality (the images), linked to every one perception and history. The images stimulated us about this dimensions: movement and stillness, fullness and emptiness, a big variety intersecting and interweaving, identities more defined and diversities more shared, fragmentation but more richness.

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

We singled out 5 cultural changes areas (for the last 10 years), which are influencing our women’s life and our Grail group.

ECONOMIC AND POLITIC CHANGES

✓ Globalisation: the world seems closer, but the consequences are often negative. The unemployment is increasing because the industrial productions are shifted, then more and more people become poorer and fragile.
✓ The young people have an uncertain future: often they work with precarious contracts, for them is difficult to build projects as the previous generations did.
✓ Immigration and people without documents living in the Country: the number of people arriving from extraeuropean countries is increasing and the generation of children born in Italy is becoming more visible. We are becoming a multiethnic society but social tensions are also increasing, we are not helped by our law immigration system, very conservative.
✓ Berlusconi influence: to mind one’s business is prevailing compared with common good, many people retire from politics because they don’t recognise the forms and the aims of our “democratic” system.

CONSERVATIVE ATTITUDES

- The fears produced by the economic and crisis of values drive the people to a conservative and defensive attitude.
- Italy is suffering about cultural issues, other countries are more active about cultural initiatives and more able to build new social forms
- The Catholic Church is suffering because the Vatican is backward with his positions existing before the Council, the presence of radical protestant churches is increasing.
- Our population is older and older, more than in other european countries.
- Our governments are since a lot of time conservative, established from right parties.
- We are suffering for mafia influence, not only in the south, but also in the north of our country.
- Racist attitudes (against immigrants, roma people, homosexuals) are increasing, supported by some political parties, as Lega Nord

WOMEN’S SITUATION

- After the feminism and new rights gained by the women’s movement, we see the patriarchy coming back. The domestic violence is increasing for italian and immigrant women. The work is precarious and social services diminished, this situation doesn’t help the women to maintain a good level of economic autonomy.
- The body primacy, as social recognition, is influencing many women in their choices for this new aestheticism and the fear of growing old.
The changes in familiar relations: parents/children – woman /man – young/old – and the new sexual identities and new possibilities of procreation (reproduction without sexuality – homosexual couples – transgender) are questioning us about our identity and about how to reconcile professional and familial life.

There are new groups of women, not so visible, but linked in networks. They are engaged at intellectual and social level, as the Italian theologian women coordination. (Coordinamento Italiano Teologhe)

NEW MOVEMENTS, outside of institutional structures

Cultural movements which rise and work outside of the traditional institutions are increasing:
- New spiritualities (Buddhism, meditation, lay spirituality) allowing to discover creativity
- Christian communities which are progressive and critical
- New political movements : Violet people, grass roots groups, etc
- Cultural festivals with a lot of participants: literature, philosophy, spirituality, science, etc.
- Spreading of environmental and ecological awareness, return to the nature (mother earth).

ADDITIONS

The capacity to build an autonomous personality and integrate in the community where we live is diminished. To look at the urgent problems, the lost of the symbolic thinking and the awareness of the limits, the lack of the re-elaboration and critical reading of the reality are giving rise to an psychological uneasiness. To depend as escape from the reality are increasing: drugs, alcohol, work, medicines, new intrusive medias.

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

The main challenge for our Grail group has been and is still the confrontation with other religious expressions and with lay spirituality.

The development of a deeper sense of responsibility towards our spiritual choices and paths. Instead of judging, of fearing the new ways, we learn to enter into dialogue and to grow together, to share more our diversity in order to reach a real plurality.

Challenge to maintain an evangelical life style and to hold out against influences to consume

Defence of State laicity. The atheism not as closing, but as openness, respect and dialogue.

Engagement in the justice and social freedom struggle. Presence where loneliness, poverty, violences and denial of rights are reported.

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 basis of our spirituality remains the Christian tradition with an effort to go back to its origins and to the presence and role of women, then, in order to become more creative in the search for a more open and personal way to be Christian. As theologian Mercedes Navarro Puerto says: “We are looking forward to an Europe that is secular and Christian at the same time.

Many of us study seriously the Bible in the new exegetical means and we want to keep faithful to our aim to become “women of wisdom”.

We feel us more distant from the Church and from the institutional praxis, some of us give less importance to the traditional rites (Mass) and are searching meaningful forms of expression (as Grail celebrations). We are engaged with progressive, post-Concilium movements. We strive to communicate out of our groups a new image of spirituality compared with the old religious education. We like that we are known as women able to care our religious life without religious, institutional control.
✓ Challenge to maintain the link between mystical research and political action.

4) comments about Sara Jona document

- The Sara Iona document gave us a vision of how important it is to maintain and respect our roots and cultural values, because we are born from them.
- From the document we understand better how important it is at personal and at group level to witness and to communicate new forms of life, without being trapped by the globalised and standardised market.
- It stimulated us to advertise the new generations that our ancestors' history is not elapsed but belongs to us and carries values which are meaningful and can enrich the culture we will pass on to future generations.
Meeting of Dutch Grail members on 11 September 2010.

Present: Didine Petit, Elly König, Ton Brouwer, Josette Kersters, Joke van Neerven, Phily van Dijck, Hermien van Sloten, Elly van Leeuwen, Carla van Thiel.

(Some of us have expressed regret about the small number of participants.)

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

- The Netherlands are in a process of secularisation and liberalization. Many people leave the church and say they believe in ‘something’ (Dutch: ‘iets’) which they don’t have a name for. This belief is called ‘ietsisme’. Eclecticism might be the nearest to this attitude.
- Christian politics are on their way back. At the last elections in June 2010 the Christian party lost half of its seats in parliament.
- As in many countries there are problems with the Catholic church because of sexual abuse by priests, friars and others in boarding schools and in church, which has been swept under the carpet for all these years. A Roman Catholic Women’s Organisation (Unie NKV), of which we are a member, has issued a press release regarding the ecclesiastical tightening up of the guidelines for punishing sexual abuse by clergymen. In the same document in which Rome calls this a ‘grave crime’, we read that also ordaining women or attempting to be ordained is a ‘grave crime’. Our Union thinks that it won’t do to bracket sexual abuse of children/youngsters (and women?) together with the ordination of women, because this creates the impression that the longing of women to serve the church as priests is as criminal as sexual abuse. The Women’s Alliance for Theology, Ethics and Ritual (WATER) has written an answer signed by 27 organisations and has started an on-line petition.
- The number of Muslims in our country is increasing; Islamism and anti-Islamism also. The relatively new Party For Freedom of Geert Wilders, who won 23 seats in parliament recently, wants to stop immigration from Islamic countries. He speaks about taxing headscarves and wants to forbid scarves in public buildings. Many people voted for him, because the government has lost touch with the voters and Wilders is a populist who uses many one-liners and makes promises without saying how he can make them happen. We are rather worried about this development.
- It is hard to put together a new government because of disunity; no party got more than 31 of the 150 seats in parliament.
- There is a strict policy for asylum seekers. It used to take 5-6 years before they knew whether they would be accepted as such and could stay in the country. Now they try to get it done in 2-3 years; all this time they are in uncertainty and stress. When they are refused they often hide and seek work for which no income is declared. They are often caught and imprisoned for 6 to 12 months. People from Eastern Europe who come to work here, are often treated badly with low wages and bad housing. Migrants, often women who want to marry a fellow-countryman, have to learn Dutch, know a lot about our country and pass an exam before entering the Netherlands or getting a residence permit.
- The number of women with higher education is growing. More women are working, but on the whole they are still earning less than women in other European countries. More women are working part-time and don’t reach top positions. Even now many women still think the mother should be at home for her children. To stimulate women to seek employment people looking after children were getting paid; so many grandparents applied for it. This was too expensive, so now only people with a certificate can get paid.
62 out of 150 members of parliament are women, which is an increase compared to the last elections.
- Professional involvement however is demanding very much flexibility, which can become strenuous.
- New technologies are influencing our relationships, e.g. texting with mobile phones, internet and e-mails. They facilitate our contacts, but we are missing the normal non-verbal communication in it. TGV-trains make people more mobile for long distances. More and more people are working in one country and living in another country; it can be hard to combine both.
- Egocentrism is becoming common in our society.
- Long term commitment is diminishing.
- Soil pollution and climate change are a danger for the health and well being of society.

2 In what ways is the spirituality of your Grail grouping shifted over recent times and what do you see as the major challenges for the future?

- Due to these crises in society and in the Church as an institution many people got involved in a spiritual search. New meaningful answers have to be given. New ways of living can be created. We need more personal communication, quietness, silence, contact with nature and solidarity.
- The Grail can answer to these needs in a constructive way and offer alternatives: interreligious triadologue, ecumenism (e.g. with agape celebrations), Bible study, Zen, care for excluded persons (migrants), actions against sexual abuse (SRTV, One Body program, networking with European Women’s Lobby), programs about ecology. We may have to use the new communication technologies, the so-called ‘social media’ like Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn to be in contact with younger people, collaborate in several networks, employ young women in our projects, offer possibilities for volunteer work. We could organise meals, fast days, singing, dancing and watching movies together with migrants. We also would like to offer possibilities for community living.

The Dutch Grail is involved in the following activities.

- We shall give our first discrimination awareness training in November 2010. We are an associate partner of CEJI and Belieforma, the organisation which organises and supports religious diversity programs. Elly König and Ine van Emmerik hope to start a course for Teachers Training Religious Diversity in Dutch. So far CEJI only gave teachers trainings in French, German and English.
- Our ‘Grail School’ starts series on questions of the day, discussed on TV, radio and newspapers. We start off with: what kind of food do we eat, and gen-in-food.
- We are involved in the fight against trafficking in women. Each country received information and flyers about it from Ton Brouwer. That organisation has issued a DVD with a booklet ‘Elena’, the story of a woman who has suffered trafficking, for which Mieke Borgdorff painted many beautiful pictures.
- We invited for our general assembly two Muslim women of the Hagar-Sarah group, to tell us about their lives and their religion.
- Some of us are involved in ecumenical cooperation or are working as a pastoral worker.
- On a detention boat for refugees Chris de Leeuw is working as a volunteer for the Sunday services and for playing games with them once a week. Often they say: “Why do they treat me as a criminal? I have not committed any crime!” These men are sometimes, after a lot of work, accepted as asylum seeker, but often they are sent back to their country; we guess that
more than half of those prisoners are ‘clinkered’ (a clinker is a brick in a street): they get a note that they have to be out of the country within 48 hours…

- Carla van Thiel is involved with a group of German, Kenyan and Ugandan Grail members in the ‘One world Discussion group’.

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?

In recent years not so much has changed, but since about 10 years it is no longer a matter of fact to have a Eucharistic Celebration when we have a Grail meeting such as the annual general assembly. Some experience this as a loss. Sometimes we celebrate an Agapè or find inspiration in other spiritual movements such as Buddhism, Soefi. Praying together seems to have become less important. There is less time, less interest for ‘devotional practices’. Church bonding has decreased, also due to the fact that parishes have disappeared. It seems we pay more attention to meeting God in daily life, in people, in circumstances. Since a couple of years a midweek for prayer and reflection has again been offered. It has helped some participants to rediscover the value of daily personal prayer and/or reflection. We see as a true challenge:

- Although often the negative side of new developments prevails, they can also have a positive aspect; trying to discover the positive aspects can help to counterbalance the negative.
- to have more depth in our ecumenical celebrations.
- Not to forget our Christian heritage

4. Do you have any further comments or observations?

- The Grail is affected by the many changes in the Dutch Church and in Society. Through these changes the Grail has changed as well. It is sometimes difficult to make clear what the Grail stands for. A stronger witness to what the Grail means for us is needed.
- Many Grail members make use of the modern communication technologies as mentioned above. This, together with the Website and the work of the International Secretariat has helped a lot to improve communication within the movement. Communication remains very important for us, internationally as well as in smaller circles, personal as well as electronically. We must remain aware also of those members who for whatever reason do not have access to the modern media.
**TXINTXA 2 RESPONSES - PORTUGAL**

Reflection notes – Golegã Group

**“CULTURAL CHANGES AND SPIRITUAL CHALLENGES “**

Based on the exercise suggested by the international team – B. The shape of your culture

**Question:**

- b. “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?”

**Answer(s)**

- Lack of vision of the future/low quality of leadership
- USA culture domination
- Domination of economic aspects in a neoliberal model
- Widening income gap between the rich and the poor
- Aggressive competition
- Different perception of time and space
- Growing geographical, work and cultural mobility of the Portuguese people and growing immigration.
- Growing multiculturality
- Population ageing: increasing longevity and birth rate decline
- Paradox: attempt of maximum citizen control coexisting with control absence
- Huge amount of information and media manipulation, resulting in less and worse information
- Wider awareness of Human Rights more present in society
- Gender issues progressively more present
- Increase in the participation of women in the life of society
- Environmental questions
- Techno-science as ideology
- Development of biotechnology and bioethical issues
- Growing search for symbolic/spiritual issues together with the spread of materialism
- Decrease in the dimension of the “religious” and increase in the search of the transcendent
- Increase in the attendance at Fatima shrine

**c. Question:**

“What cultural influences do we see dying out in our society now or in the next few years?”

**Answer:**

- Decline in the religious observance in the Catholic Church.
- Loss of well-defined political ideologies.
- Decrease of long duration personal ties.
- Loss of a feeling of safety in society

**d. “Main spiritual challenges”** being faced by our Grail grouping today as a result of the impact of these cultural influences

- We need to make a big collective permanent effort to be more attentive to ongoing cultural changes, which happen faster and faster, are more diffuse and hard to identify.

- We are challenged to accept uncertainty: to run risks is a Grail characteristic. But even so I feel, sometimes, that our common immaterial patrimony can and must be questioned. The ballast of a boat can simultaneously give it stability and safety or tie it to the bottom and bring it to a standstill.

- Permanent attention to and reflection upon the phenomena and events, it is important to demarcate a position regarding some questions.
- Attitude of openness to diversity

- Attention to what is essential and gives us structure.

- Analyze the situation or event in the light of the Gospels. SEE-JUDGE-ACT.

- Join other groups and movements we have affinities with to “swim against the stream”

- Have critical information that leads to reflection in Grail groupings and other groups.

- Permanent reflection on the phenomena/events and to take position about them.

- To be an alternative space in the society we live in. Attention to the other. A different kind of care.

- To work within each of us the flexibility of what I am, what I want, what I can.

- To be aware that we are a “tool with expiry date”. That expiry date is determined by the judgement of others and the Spirit.

- Collectively, to replace the paradigm of power-control by the paradigm of flexibility, of welcome, of search – discernment of the heart in the vision of a larger and better Mission capacity.

- Challenge to be what we really are.

The Grail should be a place of welcome, 

\textit{oikos}, like the house that can be inhabited by others, regardless of the fact of those others wanting to remain there or not.

Golegã, October 2010

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\textbf{TXINTXA - 2ª Fase}

\textbf{Notas da reflexão do Grupo de Pertença da Golegã}

\textbf{“MUDANÇAS CULTURAIS E DESAFIOS ESPIRITUAIS”}

Com base no exercício sugerido pela equipa internacional – \textit{B. A forma da vossa cultura}

\textbf{Questão:}

\begin{itemize}
\item [b.] O que é que vemos como as principais influências culturais com impacto na nossa sociedade de hoje, e que continuarão a afectá-la ainda durante alguns anos?
\end{itemize}

\textbf{Resposta(s)}

- Falta de visão do futuro/baixa qualidade das lideranças
- A dominação cultural dos EUA
- Domínio do económico num modelo neo-liberal
- Aumento do fosso entre ricos e pobres
- Competitividade agressiva
- Uma diferente percepção de tempo e do espaço
- Crescente mobilidade geográfica, laboral e cultural dos Portugueses, e crescimento da imigração.
- Multiculturalidade crescente.
- Envelhecimento da população: aumento da longevidade e descida da natalidade
- Paradoxo: tentativa do máximo controle dos cidadãos coexistindo com ausência de controle
- Grande quantidade de informação e manipulação dos media, resultando em menos e pior informação
- Consciência alargada dos Direito Humanos mais presente na sociedade
- Questões de género progressivamente mais presentes
- Aumento da participação das mulheres na vida da sociedade
- Questões do ambiente, do Planeta
- A tecno-ciência como ideologia
- Desenvolvimento da bio-tecnologia e questões da bio-ética
- Crescida da dimensão do “religioso” e aumento da busca do transcendente
- Incremento da frequência do culto ligado ao santuário de Fátima

c. Questão:
Que influências culturais estão a morrer agora na nossa sociedade ou continuarão a morrer nos próximos anos?

Resposta:
- Diminuição da Prática religiosa na Igreja Católica.
- Perda das Ideologias políticas bem identificadas
- Diminuição dos Laços pessoais de longa duração
- Perda do Sentimento de segurança na sociedade

d. “Desafios espirituais que o nosso grupo do Graal hoje tem que enfrentar como resultado do impacto destas influências culturais”.

- Precisamos de fazer um grande esforço colectivo permanente de atenção às mudanças culturais em curso que são cada vez mais rápidas, mais difusas e difíceis de identificar.
- Somos muito desafiadas a aceitar o incerto: correr riscos é próprio do Graal. Mas, ainda assim, sinto, por vezes, que o nosso património imaterial comum pode e deve ser mais questionado. O lastro de um barco tanto serve para lhe dar estabilidade ou segurança, como pode prendê-lo ao fundo e imobilizá-lo.
- Permanentemente atenção e reflexão sobre os fenómenos e acontecimentos, importante demarcar uma posição face a algumas questões.
- Atitude de abertura à diversidade
- Atenção àquilo que é essencial e nos estrutura.
- Fazer a análise da situação ou acontecimento à luz do Evangelho. É o VER-JULGA-AGIR.
- Juntarmo-nos com outros grupos e movimentos com quem temos afinidades para “remar contra a maré”.
- Ter informação crítica para levar à reflexão em grupos do graal e outros grupos.
- Reflexão permanente sobre os fenómenos/acontecimentos e tomar posição face a eles.
- Sermos espaços de encontro alternativo à sociedade em que vivemos. Atenção ao outro. Cuidar de outra maneira.
- Trabalhar em cada uma de nós a flexibilidade do que sou, do que quero, do que posso.
- Ter a consciência de que somos um “instrumento com prazo de validade”. E que essa validade é dada pelo juízo dos outros e do Espírito.

- Ao nível do coletivo, substituir o paradigma do poder-controle pelo paradigma da flexibilidade, do acolhimento, da procura – discernimento do coração na visão de uma maior e melhor capacidade de Missão.

- Desafio a ser-se aquilo que se é.

O graal deve ser um sítio de acolhimento, oikos, como a casa que pode ser habitada por outros, independentemente de esses outros quererem permanecer nela ou não.

Golegã Outubro 2010

TXINTXA 2

“Mudanças culturais e desafios espirituais”

Respostas às Questões para Reflexão – Grupo Graal Foz

1. A secularização da sociedade
   . A transição para um paradigma de sociedade tecnológica/virtual
   . A passagem de Portugal de um país de emigrantes para um país de imigrantes
   . O rápido crescimento econômico nos últimos 30 anos.

2. Exerceu sobre nós influências subtils, que moldaram a nossa maneira de pensar, agir e as nossas atitudes. Colocou-nos em confronto permanente com o novo e o imediato, deixou de haver tempo para maturação. Despertou entre nós discussões/análises novas e muito proveitosas.

3. Pensamos que não houve grande mudança, antes uma continuidade; achamos, contudo, que nos tornámos mais abertas a novas correntes espirituais e conscientes da sua existência. Esta abertura é o nosso desafio para o futuro.

“Cultural changes and spiritual challenges”

Answers to the Questions for Reflection – Group Graal Foz

1. The secularization of society
   . The transition to a paradigm of a technological/virtual society
   . Portugal’s transition from a country of emigrants to a country of immigrants
   . Portugal’s economic boom in the last thirty years

2. It exerted on us subtle influences that shaped our way of thinking, acting, our attitudes. It put us in permanent confrontation with what is new, what is immediate, it left us no time for maturation. It triggered among us new discussions/analysis that proved to be very fruitful.
3. We think there was no great change, rather a continuity; we deem however that we became more open to new spiritual currents and aware of their existence. This openness is our challenge for the future.

TXINTXA – 2nd phase  (In English)

Coimbra Group – Berta Afonso, Inês Borges Reis, Lúcia Veloso, Maria Amélia Agra, Maria dos Anjos Saraiva, Maria Keating, Natália Cruz.

October, 2010

Culture changes and spiritual challenges

The reflexion about this theme was a challenge to us, thinking about a previous very pertinent question: how do we characterize spirituality of our group?

Immediately it seemed that we have different ways of living spirituality. After, deepening the reflexion, we tried to find common, essential and structuring points of our life in group:

1. Prayer – starting from reflexion about the importance of praying in spirituality of each one of us, we learned more clearly the meaning of the prayer in, and within, the group.
2. Reflexion about several themes, not necessarily religious.
3. Valuing liturgical moments that we live in common.
4. Silence as a source of interior enrichment and not as cause of isolation that prevents communication.
5. Sharing life and faith experiences.
6. Sharing readings and knowledge as a way to complement and enrich us, as a group, and each other.

Answers to the questions to reflexion in Grail groups

1. More strong cultural influences present in our country today?

   a) Information, documentation, communication technologies: there are editions in several supports, networks in the internet, cellular telephones, tele-work, e-learning, ... 

   b) conquest of freedom of religion, expression and opinion, and sexual freedom too

   c) women are more present and visible in society

   d) ecological consciousness and concern about sustainability questions

   e) supremacy of scientific and technological culture

   f) access to different languages

   g) increasing value of material things/possessions and desire of power

   h) mobility and ways of life less sedentary (changing work, changing country, ...)
i) change of family model

j) weight of adolescent culture, increasing of cult of physical, of music and its message

l) culture of caring - assumed specially by institutions with vocation for a social action near more underprivileged people

2. In what forms our group spirituality was influenced or challenged by these culture changes?

a) openness to plurality

b) another way (more rich) of seeing, reading and living Christianity

c) greater acceptance and comprehension of different vision of God, World and Religions

3. What do we consider to be the main challenges to the future?

a) spirituality as a necessary motor to the action of transforming life and world

b) developing dialogue with other people and their spiritualities we deep better in our own spirituality.

TXINTXA – 2ª fase

Grupo Coimbra – Natália Cruz, Maria Keating, Berta Afonso, Lúcia Veloso, Maria Amélia Agra, Inês Borges Reis, Maria dos Anjos Saraiva

Outubro, 2010

Mudanças culturais e desafios espirituais

A reflexão sobre o tema desafiou o grupo a pensar a questão prévia e muito pertinente: como caracterizamos a espiritualidade do nosso grupo de pertença?

De imediato pareceu-nos que temos diferentes formas de viver a espiritualidade. Uma reflexão mais profunda levou-nos a encontrar pontos comuns essenciais e estruturantes da vida do grupo:

1. A oração – partindo da reflexão sobre a importância de rezar na espiritualidade de cada uma de nós, apreendemos com maior clareza o significado da oração em/no grupo.

2. A reflexão sobre temas diversos, não necessariamente religiosos.

3. A valorização de momentos litúrgicos vividos em comum.

4. O silêncio como fonte de enriquecimento interior e não como causador de isolamento que impede a comunicação.

5. A partilha de experiências de vida e de fé.

6. A partilha de leituras e saberes como forma de nos complementarmos e enriquecermos.

Resposta às questões para reflexão nos grupos do Graal

1) Influências culturais mais fortes presentes no país hoje?

   a) tecnologias de informação, documentação, comunicação: existência de edições em vários suportes, redes da internet, telemóveis, tele-trabalho…

   b) conquista da liberdade de expressão e opinião, religiosa, sexual
c) presença e visibilidade da mulher na sociedade  
d) consciência ecológica e preocupação com as questões da sustentabilidade  
e) supremacia da cultura científica e tecnológica  
f) acesso a diversas línguas e linguagens  
g) valorização dos bens materiais e desejo de poder  
h) mobilidade e desedentarização  
i) alteração do modelo de família  
j) peso da cultura da adolescência, do culto do físico, da música e da sua mensagem  
l) cultura do cuidado - assumida especialmente por instituições vocacionadas para a acção social junto dos mais desfavorecidos  

2) De que formas a espiritualidade do nosso grupo foi afectada/desafiada por estas alterações culturais?  
   a) abertura à pluralidade  
   b) outra forma (mais rica) de ver, ler e viver o Cristianismo  
   c) maior aceitação e compreensão das diferentes visões de Deus, do Mundo e das Religiões  

3) O que consideramos ser os principais desafios para o futuro?  
   a) a espiritualidade como motor necessário à acção transformadora da vida e do mundo  
   b) ao desenvolvermos o diálogo com os outros e as suas espiritualidades melhor aprofundamos a nossa própria espiritualidade.
Txinxa 2 – A Comment from the Swedish Grail

We would like to share with you the experiences and reflections on diversity/pluralism from two different occasions: a discussion from the Grail retreat in Sobrado in May; and a creative gathering around Mary, the mother of Jesus.

a) One morning during our retreat in Sobrado, Spain, we had a reflection on the phase 2 of the Txinxa process, based on the reflection paper by Sara Jonas, which we read with interest and joy. It is difficult to summarize and actually, we were not in full agreement - there were different points of view. Here I bring up some points only, on the theme of unity in diversity:

One point was the continued relevance of some of our previous and present Grail documents, for instance “God the mystery of our lives” from our faith message. ‘God the mystery’ formulation leaves room for everybody. In the faith message we also have the wonderful metaphor of a crystal: ‘Just as the crystal reflects light in a multitude of colours, our belief reflects the different experiences and expressions of faith among us. (…) We support one another’s searching and discoveries, rejoicing in the radiant colours which the one light evokes in the crystal’.

But can we include everybody and everything in the Grail? Concentrate on the center – not the borders! was one suggestion. Why defend the boundaries? We have the search in common, was another response. Let’s meet in one another’s search. One of the challenges of our present time is the growing polarization in the world. Let us not fall in that trap ourselves, one said. ‘Don’t be afraid’, Jesus said. We need to learn to handle of fears.

b) On the 11th of September - a day that symbolizes hatred and fear - more than 40 women (and some brave men) gathered in the parish church, Santa Maria, situated in a multicultural area outside Uppsala. Now living in the same area, there people have come from different countries (Sweden, Denmark, Palestine, Ethiopia, Lebanon, Jordan, Poland, Chile...), churches (Lutherans, Roman Catholics, Maronites from Lebanon, Greek Orthodox, Pentecostals...) or no-churches. We gathered to reflect on a young Jewish woman who gave birth to Jesus Christ and who's story is told in the Koran: Mary.

We shared personal stories on losing children, of joy and resilience. We used a multitude of new and old pictures and texts on Mary. We danced in a circle before the altar. We laughed and cried. In the end of the day we had a lecture and a discussion.

We rediscovered that a face-to-face meeting with someone different from you is both enriching and challenging. There are both easy and not so easy ways/methods of bonding despite differences: creative rituals are great when set in a generous atmosphere; to share personal stories and experiences is also very good. Making statements on the other hand, is more difficult. Words can be sharp as a sword and they depend on friendship and trust.

Kerstin Jacobsson and Bibi Helgesson, Uppsala 31 October 2010.
Diversity – Plurality? This question has become very important for us. But I do not see a real difference between the two. In any case, for us, Grail Movement, it is a fact, as one wrote: “plurality is intrinsic to the Grail” (US) – the actual variety of the members, Catholic, Catholic without Church, Protestant, Buddhist, or even nothing at all. Some new members do not know the existence of the Nucleus.

Two other facts, it seems to me constitute the Grail to-day:
- the adaptation to society – even for the African groups, if they are keeping on a more traditional faith and religious way of living it is due to their traditional society.
- The search for spirituality

I must say that I see an enormous change in the Grail personality, in its identity and life. From what it was in the beginning, a Catholic movement of the Church, it has become a social movement, the activities being mainly social ones. The language itself is very symbolic – the words belonging to the Christian faith have quite disappeared (Christ, faith, Church, Our Lady, saints, holiness, etc….). This evolution has taken progressively place in the consensus of a majority.

We can say that something new has come out of the old one. Why not? But I feel the need that this would be recognised with lucidity and also with truth towards ourselves, as a fact and as a choice. To recognise where we come from and where we are. Every religious or civil foundation, when time has passed, feels the need to consider their own origin. I would have thought that we intended to do so in our present search about our existence.

Actually there is an acute problem in the way we introduce ourselves. Bénédicte Milcent said: ‘un flou hallucinant’ (an amazing vagueness), though she herself, at that time, had taken some distance from the Church. Can we stand upon vagueness?

Ecumenism means something else than what we live at the moment. Ecumenism is rather the encounter within the very differences - ‘It is when the beliefs are strong that they are capable of opening themselves to the others’ (S. Egidio). (The example of the monastery of Boze in Italy and so many others’.

Also the word ‘spirituality’ - such a general word … What does it really mean for us? And our ‘vision of the Grail’, a long life expression belonging to the movement from the beginning. How do we relate to it now? Has it a different content given all the changes in our life and belief?

Perhaps exchanges about the Christian faith are existing in small groups: ‘who is Christ for us?’(in Holland, I think), the resurrection (a major doubt today among Christians), the Eucharist (Nicoletta’s work and a subject very much present among ourselves) etc. … But how could these local exchanges appear in a more common reflection on the international level?

What appears between us is rather more doubt. With its positive side, indeed, but also very much as a way to question, the ‘fundamental’ basis of the faith. Even a certain hostility towards a Church understood as a human institution, with all its misery and mistakes, then people take a distance.

All that can be understood as an attitude of openness towards the others, towards the world, compared to the one which sticks to ‘tradition’. ‘The Church does not hold the truth alone’, ‘The Gospel: they are simply words of men’ etc. Those thoughts and others are very important and very
commonly spread, but (it is the way I feel), they are not studied thoroughly enough - Sometimes, it seems that one could answer them easily…

In any case, we can simply say that if there is no resurrection, neither is there Jesus Christ, nor Eucharist, nor Church, etc. Neither resurrection of the dead. And what about God Himself, rarely mentioned?

Perhaps we could ask ourselves whether we shouldn’t together pay more attention to what for years has been (and still is for some of us) such an alive and strong life in the Grail.

I allow myself to write these thoughts reading in our papers (Txintxa, June 2009 and June 2010 - US Nucleus meeting) so many basic questions concerning both our reality today and the past of the Grail. I am surprised by those concerning the Nucleus. I can understand the interrogations of a young member (Katie Sellers).

But I want to add that these thoughts are, we can say, objectives, bound to the place where I stand in life (like everyone of us…) but that they do not affect my respect for all and my friendship with many. A lot of precious things have happened along the years.

Last, but not least, perhaps (but I don’t know really) we do not pray sufficiently in our search? Our Lady, in all her manifestations on earth - of course one cannot believe in them, but there are millions of people who receive graces there – doesn’t cease to incite us to pray, not in order to pray better, but to pray a lot! It is almost the only thing that she says! And we can think about the enormous challenges at stake with all the distresses of the world.