C R O S S R O A D S

A Newsletter of the Grail International Leadership Team

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Letter from the ILT

Dear sisters in the Grail:

As each new year begins, we share a deep sense with one another that a page in history has been turned. The year 2015 is now ended, and all our experiences during that year are somehow wrapped up and finished. We can look forward to a new chapter in our lives, one that we hope will be filled with happiness and all good things.

At the same time, we know we need to take stock of that package of 2015 now wrapped up neatly on the shelf. For the International Leadership Team, 2015 was packed with international experiences, shared with so many friends from all the Grail countries.

August and September's International Council meeting in Australia followed closely on the heels of the European Regional Meeting at Golega in Portugal that had happened in July – a time of comradery and enjoyment under the warm Portuguese sun – after so many meetings in June and July in the Netherlands with the International Formation Team and the coordinators of the Global Networks and in Germany with the Nucleus Team and the Blessing the Space Team.

Then Zodwa, Maria Carlos and Marian were off to the southern hemisphere for the ending of winter in Australia where all the warmth was furnished by the hospitality of the Australian Grail members welcoming us to Sydney. Braving the winter winds while enjoying the unique birds and animals of Australia, International Council members devoted themselves to a whole variety of tasks at hand, including coming to know one another, since the majority of these were first-timers. The relative youth of the whole group brought a freshness and vitality to considerations.

Having finished the report on the IC meeting before we ever left Australia in September, ILT members were free for adventures on other continents. By October, Zodwa was participating in the 40th anniversary celebrations of the Grail in the Philippines, along with Carla van Thiel from the Netherlands – a joyous series of celebrations in which four new women made their commitments as Grail members while all continuing members renewed their own. (This "moment of grace" is described in an article in this issue of *Crossroads*.)

For Maria Carlos, the months after the IC meeting in Australia were spent with the Grail in Mozambique, followed by an intensive time of preparation for the big gatherings of December at Kisekibaha in Tanzania and Rubaga in Uganda. During those weeks of December, 57 Grail members from eight countries gathered for deep sharing and reflection on the Nucleus, and for the dedication of ten Grail members in Tanzania and one in Uganda. There in East Africa, it was the rain that presented such a challenge participants thought they might have to swim to sessions.

For Marian, the months after the IC meeting were filled by trips first to the Parliament of World Religions in Salt Lake City – 10,000 Moslem, Buddhist, Christian, Jewish, Jain, Hindu, Shinto, Taoist, Confucian and Baha'i participants sharing ways of working together for a world of compassion, peace, justice and sustainability – and from there to southern California to visit the 16 Grail members living at Pilgrim Place, including our dear Anne Hope who has so recently left us. The month of December for Marian was spent in the hospital and in a

nursing home because of knee replacement surgery, from which she is recovering satisfactorily. She felt with real joy the impact of prayers and good wishes from all over the world.

So 2015 is now all wrapped up with strings of commitment and energy, while we look forward to an International General Assembly in hardly more than a year. The three of us wish you all a beautiful and happy New Year, wherever you find yourself in this extended Grail community. We are so glad we are sisters to you all.

Much love,

Maria Carlos, Zodwa and Marian

From the Editor *Carol Siemering, USA*

For our theme, this issue, we explored our work as and for women. These were some questions I sent to consider:

- How are we are "strengthened by the compassionate energy and creative action of women" as it says in our International Vision Statement?
- Are we working specifically with women or girls to harness, to explore, to celebrate their unique contribution to society and to the world?
- Are we grappling with inequality, mistreatment, and disregard for women still so present in our times?

We received many beautiful pictures with the submission of these articles, but due to the size of this issue we were unable to share them all.

Grail Project in San Jose, *Rosa Ruiz, USA*

Some time ago, after immigrating to the US from Mexico, I learned a saying; " A woman's work is never done" For a while I thought it only related to the house work, and soon I learned that it relates to all the aspects of a woman's life, from organizing her house to organizing the world.

For me, being exposed to, and working with, the Grail has been one of the best training schools for life, seeing and meeting so many women that took major projects and challenges throughout their lives so that other women, and men, could have a better life. Even if this work meant going to other countries and learning a new language, in some cases leaving their country and looking for political asylum elsewhere, always with the courage that comes from knowing they were doing the right thing for the right reason. These are very hard shoes to fill, to say the least and, in a very humbled way, I have felt that challenge, that push, to do the right thing, to do a bit more even when this means to go against the grain.

And because the work is never done in the Grail, I volunteered to be part of a building project with other 8 ordinary women. With the exception of one, none of us had previous experience of building or directing projects, some with only 6 grade school education. After several years of very hard labors, sleepless nights, confrontations with city government officials, much prayers and hope, the Grail Family Services Center became a reality, now dedicated to serve women and their families. In its 16 years of existence it has served many hundreds of families, it has improve their odds of succeeding in life through education and new skills, most of all, through empowering the women so they can, in turn, empower their families. Now some of these women are becoming the new leaders, teaching and encouraging other women to do the same. Now I just do the fun

part, I volunteer at one of the several elementary schools that are served by the Grail Family Services, in a program called: "Yes We Can Read" I work with new immigrant children, from Latin America and Asia, to recognize the English alphabet, the syllables and we read fun books and learn the new words and about each other's culture and find out how similar we all are. I think this is how the world gets transformed into a more peaceful place, less fear of the "other"

And the cycle begins, and the work continues, tomorrow these children will be the new leaders, hopefully with self confidence and caring for the well being of others because... a woman's job, is never done.

GIRA| Creating Initiatives and Alternative Realities, *The Grail Team Portugal*

As we shared before the Grail in Portugal promoted in Coimbra, 2013/2014, an empowerment project for women that were either unemployed or in a vulnerable situation.

We would like now to share a little more information about it because we believe that it can be applied to other contexts, realities with positive results.

The project had partnerships with some of the city's institutions (governmental, council, union services and such) organized in a network that aimed at resolving problems a transforming everyday life within a logic of participative citizenship and gender equality.

The project was developed throughout 25 weeks with a program that had two groups of women - in the whole there were 30 women of various age groups (some young women), migrants and others – in which we sought after having diversity of past experiences as a form of enriching the groups.

The program was based on methods of non-formal education for adults in which The Grail has vast experience, namely the methodology of "Training for Transformation", based on Paulo Freire, that builds from the reality of the participants – and their critical analysis – for a search of transforming solutions in their lives and community. It's a perspective on non-formal education as a unifying process of putting together some elements, giving meaning to experiences that otherwise would be separated. Because the program was developed in a group context the participants also beneficiated from the support and empathy created in a dynamic of sharing different situations that were also similar in the sense of them being "experts of personal experience" and acting towards the transformation of their individual and collective situation.

A second line of action in the project was the implementation of sensibillization actions in the thematics of Gender Equality, Reconciliation, Domestic Violence and Human Trafficking directed at professionals from the institutions that worked with disadvantaged people.

GIRA
Gerar
Iniciativas
e Realidades Alternativas

As a result of the project's two lines of action, a Public Hearing was done in which the intervenients in the project shared experiences, reflected and, alongside the community, proposed changing strategies.

The whole process of reflection-action had repercussions on the level of institutional technicians and on the general community level, namely the case

of a promotion of an institutional network that remained active after the project that had a social cohesion sense with a multiplication effect.

The project was accompanied by a team of experts in various areas of intervention that were present from the start with diagnostic and evaluation functions (ex-ante), throughout the project (ongoing) and after its finalization (ex-post).

The project was innovative at the regional and national level in the methodologies of inclusion and participation applied, in a context of groups where the "experts of personal experience" were actively building the project's results. As to the context and objectives, the construction of a non-formal education program for adults was as an innovative factor, with focus in Gender Equality and Citizenship for transformation in the participants' lives.

Testimony from Women in the project: "In this project I realized the certainty of my potential" Adalgisa – 30 years old; "… it's in the present day that we should build our fight, our search, our quest." Mariana – 23 years old; "What binds us together is the joy of knowledge" Judite – 45 years old; "As the sessions went on I understood that the motto was the woman's role and her capacity for changing and increasing society's value" Isabel- 55 years old; "A woman should never give up, she should for her ideals. I ask of all the women that are unemployed, with all the problems in your life: Women of Portugal, Women of Coimbra, don't give up. Fight, fight, fight!" Sara 64 years old.

As for the Grail team that worked on this project, our testimony is given through the testimony of the women that participated in the project! We reinforce the conviction that working with women is both a challenge and a privilege and that our women "experts of personal experience" have given us life lessons.

"But our way of living is not irremediable!" (The Grail Manifest in Portugal)

The Grail Team
Natália Cruz (in memorian), Rute Castela e Ana Costa

Working with and for women, *Marina Sangalli and Lucia Cattaneo, Italy*

"DONNE IN RETE": a project for women's empowerment in Italy
Marina Sangalli - Il Graal Italia

I live in Milano, a big town or small city, and I've personally experienced how difficult it can be to find a good balance between family, profession and self-actualization. When I had my first child, my mom was 72 years of age and not really in good health, my husband's mother was the same age and lived 4 hours away driving. No sisters or female relatives were around me, friends were very busy with their lives and worked as well. I was very lucky because my husband was so helpful and engaged as a father, so we shared in the joys and duties of parenthood. Moreover, the company I was working for let me stay at home the first months with the baby and I was able to go back to my job without being penalized.

My personal experience is shared by so many women in Italy but most of them are not as lucky and when it comes to maternity, they know they'll have to give up career advancement and take on most of the child care and housework. This means long years of rushing and toiling with no time for themselves, slowly losing enthusiasm, energy, and desires.

That is why 4 years ago, I decided with a friend of mine, who is also a counselor, to design and offer (in addition to our normal professional work) a counseling program for "women on the verge of a nervous breakdown", coined by the famous Spanish film director Almodovar.

Our objective was to bring together small groups of women (a maximum of 6) and offer them a chance, through self-reflection, body work and sharing, to find out what they really desire and how they can make small but meaningful changes in their everyday lives in order to feel they have a new purpose and can take ownership of their lives.

We decided to have a "light" program schedule because women have so little time and would be put off by long sessions. The basic program consists of 3 sessions of 3 hours each, one Saturday afternoon per month for 3 months, at a very affordable price.
The topics of the sessions are: *Listening to/ Feeling the desires, being confident of your value; Mediating between work, emotional ties and time for yourself; transforming the present and planning the future.*

It's always very inspiring to see that when you bring women together, a mysterious energy is created (and that's the very same powerful feeling I always enjoy at Grail meetings) that enables everyone to immediately feel at home and open themselves up. A counseling setting is a protected and non-judgmental space which makes the opening and letting go easier.
Since 2013 we have been running three rounds of the basic program and are offering advanced programs on different topics. The program is run at the Grail Center in Milan, which gives us a chance to also let more women learn about the Grail. Once a year we now also offer a weekend retreat because women appreciate how important it is to stay together and giving themselves space and time of reflection.

We now have 18 women in the network and are launching new basic programs every year. After 3 years we see concrete changes in these women: some have switched jobs, developed their interests and hidden talents, built nurturing relationships, become mentors or spokeswomen themselves for other women, and ultimately realized that a better balance is possible. Above all, they have realized that they are not alone and that they can reach out to and lean on other women in order to get the courage and inspiration to go for a change.
I am so grateful to my family, my profession and to the Grail women that are the inspiration for this project and hope that this experience can be expanded and reach many more women.

Coaching Mothers upon re-entry at work after maternity leave
Lucia Cattaneo - Il Graal Italia

As part of my work as a consultant working with persons undergoing career transitions (people who have lost their jobs or want to change professions), I have been offered the possibility of getting involved in a project dedicated to new mothers. This project involves companies that want to offer their employees a short individual coaching (3 sessions) upon re-entry after taking maternity leave (in Italy leave can be many months).

Italy is one of the European countries with the lowest fertility rate and the highest rate of unemployment among women with children. I myself have worked more than full-time for over 25 years in the Human Resource Department of a multi-national corporation and when I had my two children, it was difficult to disentangle myself daily between work responsibilities, a "quality" presence with my children, always being a good mother, wife, person working for the social good, impeccable professional, etc.

This obviously didn't always work and that which has helped me in the most difficult moments, besides the support of my family (husband, parents, sister and children) has been the solid network of friends and Grail sisters that have helped me become aware of my needs and desires.

This is why I was so passionate about getting involved in this new project with young mothers.
The aim of this project is primarily to raise awareness among companies and the managers of new mothers to question the methods of management and communication with their employees returning from maternity leave, and urge them to introduce those small changes that can greatly facilitate the return to work (e.g. not scheduling meetings in the late afternoon, promote greater flexibility in working hours, ...).

On the other hand, the project directly engages the mothers through 3 individual coaching sessions, organized every 3-4 weeks, during which the coach helps the mothers understand what situations create the most stress, whether in the familial or work environments, and helps her find new ways of confronting these challenges.

In these two years as coach, I have met many mothers for whom returning to work is anything but serene and stress-free, not only because of the objective difficulties in reconciling all the aspects of their personal and professional lives, but above all for the constant sense of guilt regarding their child/ren that they do not "see growing up" and that their work "upon which they can't focus like before" (and this sense of guilt is often strongly fueled by relatives and employers who are not very understanding).

In reality, each and every mother has specific situations that make it difficult to reconcile motherhood with full-time work and that leads her to continually ask "Maybe I would be better off staying at home and taking care of my child". During this brief coaching experience, it has been wonderful to see the mother grow in awareness of her discomforts, desires and capacity to find those solutions that can immediately help her value being a mother and at the same time a person who practices her profession (for example, learning to delegate, ask for help, express clearly what she needs, to not be conditioned by stereotypes and other people's expectations)… and perhaps make choices that were previously unthinkable.
Now that I have fully absorbed this experience, I am trying to find a way to expand this project, as a volunteer, to other working women who are in a more precarious situations and/or not as well-served.

Día Internacional de la Niña, *Maya Gallardo y Gabriel Barzalobre, Morelos Valle de Mexico*

No sé cuál es el momento preciso en el que me convertí en una *sacred activist*, quizá fue aquella noche que me "puse la camiseta" del Grial en Cornwall. Ello me puso nerviosa y tranquila al mismo tiempo; supe que hay mujeres y niñas trabajando y peleando por mujeres como yo, pero también supe que tengo que (y quiero) trabajar y pelear por ellas también.

El verano pasado, todas las ideas y percepciones que solía tener acerca de los problemas de las mujeres y el cómo resolverlas cambió de manera radical. Aprendí a ver que, aun cuando aparentemente no vivo o padezco algún tipo de violencia por ser mujer, hay 7 mil 185 mujeres desaparecidas en mi país y que, yendo más allá, 44% de ese número son niñas.

El día de la Niña fue el primer examen que tuvimos después del *summercamp* en Cornwall. Fue un compromiso y llegó el día para cumplirlo. En México tuvimos dos días de actividades y trabajo con niñas. El sábado 10 trabajamos con un grupo de niñas en Los Reyes La Paz, esta fue la segunda ocasión que nos reunimos. La primera vez nos reunimos para hablar acerca de nosotras: ¿quiénes eramos? ¿de dónde veníamos?, ¿qué queremos hacer en nuestros presentes y en nuestros futuros?, ¿cómo podemos ayudar a otras niñas y trabajar juntas?
Esta segunda ocasión tuvimos la oportunidad de hablar acerca de las niñas, embarazo adolescente, violencia en el noviazgo, trata de personas, y redes sociales. También charlamos acerca del Grial, la importancia del movimiento y la importancia de los *SDG's.*

El domingo 11 tuvimos nuestro primer encuentro con niñas en Morelos. Ahí tomamos nuestro tiempo para hablar y compartir acerca del estatus de las niñas alrededor del mundo: matrimonio infantil, violencia contra las niñas y el derecho a la educación.
También trabajamos con los *SDG*' y las dinámicas de la ONU. Jugamos a ser un país y pensar en un problema de nuestras niñas, cómo solucionarlo y cómo ayudar a los otros países a solucionar sus problemas también.
Al final, elegimos un *SDG* e hicimos una propuesta para ayudar a convertirlo en sustentable.

Sabemos cuán importante es la participación de las niñas, y particularmente, nuestro trabajo en nuestras casas, comunidades, estados y país para crear un empoderamiento. Ellas son bellas, son fuertes, son inteligentes… y quizá es cierto que ellas son nuestro futuro, buero, más importante: ellas son nuestro presente, y no como un sector separado del resto de mujeres, niños y hombres; ellas son niñas y necesitamos entender cuán importante es la equidad para ellas; hacer a nuestra sociedad capaz de incluirlas en los procesos y momentos de la historia para darles las herramientas para ser personas.

Nuestro Caminar por la Justicia, *Mexico*

"NOS EMPEÑAMOS EN BUSCAR SIGNOS DE ESPERANZA EN UN MUNDO COMPLEJO" (Enunciado de la Visión del GRIAL en 2011).

Nosotras en el Grial Morelos/Valle de México, hemos venido trabajando, con un profundo respeto a la dignidad y justicia hacia las mujeres, y en un abrazo solidario nos reconocemos como hermanas, caminando siempre al lado de los y las más necesitadas.

No tenemos duda del rol que cumplen las mujeres en todos los espacios, tanto familiares, como en la comunidad, pero sin embargo por lo general las mujeres son excluidas de las decisiones públicas y privadas, quedando de manifiesto sus pocos derechos frente al hombre. Viven también expuestas continuamente a situaciones de violencia, afectando su integridad física y emocional, y uno de los problemas más fuertes es el educativo, ya que muestra la inequidad que existe en nuestro país.

Porque como es sabido que a mayor escolaridad permite una mayor información e integración social y mayores oportunidades de empleo, cosa que no sucede en estos lugares.

El sustento económico de las comunidades rurales donde trabajamos, reside en actividades agrícolas, en su mayoría de subsistencia (siembra de maíz, fríjol, jitomate, calabaza, cacahuate, pepino, tomate y chile); en el ramo de los servicios (trabajadoras domésticas), venden comida, venden artesanías que Ellas mismas elaboran, crían y venden animales domésticos, corte de frutas semillas, hierbas y arbustos silvestres..

Bajo esta panorámica hemos impulsado como movimiento de mujeres procesos de capacitación que ayuden a aligerar la carga que llevan a cuestas las mujeres al menos en las regiones donde estamos trabajando, estableciendo y poniendo en marcha proyectos que coadyuven a mejorar las condiciones de vida de los 18 grupos de mujeres constituidos.

*Talleres de Crecimiento Personal y Liderazgo en grupo (que nos sirven de base para la organización)

*Talleres Sobre Cambio Climático y Seguridad Alimentaria (concientizar a los grupos sobre el tema y dar sustento con estrategias de cultivos biointensivos con hortalizas y plantas aromáticas).

*Talleres sobre Cultura para La Paz con Niños (sensibilizando sobre el juguete no violento, para ayudar a una cultura para la Paz).

*Talleres sobre Derechos Humanos, Ambientales, y de las mujeres. (para lograr una comunidad sana justa y más igualitaria).

*Proyectos de Expansión de la Labor del Grial (abrir nuevos caminos en otros contextos sobre todo con mujeres indígenas y afrodescendientes).

*Establecimiento de Proyectos Productivos con énfasis en el Mejoramiento Económico (impulsando la construcción de una conciencia de que las posibilidades de sobrevivencia de consolidación de microempresas en los sectores populares están en su agrupamiento en conformar colectivos).

Our Walk for Justice, Morelos Valley, Mexico (English translation)

"We strive to look for signs of hope in a complex world" (Statement of Vision of the Grail in 2011).

We in the Grail Morelos / Valle de Mexico, have been working with a deep respect for dignity and justice for women, and an embrace of solidarity recognize us as sisters, always walking alongside of and the most in need.

We have no doubt the role played by women in all areas, both family and community, yet usually women are excluded from public and private decisions, it demonstrated his few remaining rights against the man. They live also continually exposed to violence, affecting their physical and emotional integrity, and one of the biggest problems is education, because it shows the inequality that exists in our country.

Because as you know that more schooling allows more information and social integration and greater employment opportunities, which does not happen in these places.

The economic livelihood of the rural communities where we work, lies in agriculture, mostly subsistence (plant corn, beans, tomatoes, squash, peanuts, cucumber, tomato and pepper); in the field of services (domestic workers), selling food, selling handicrafts that they themselves create, raise and sell pets, cut fruit seeds, herbs and wild shrubs ..

In this overview we have promoted as women's movement training processes that help lighten the load piggybacking women at least in the regions where we are working, establishing and implementing projects to help improve living conditions 18 groups formed women.

* Workshops Personal Growth and Leadership Group (we provide the basis for the organization)

* Workshops on Climate Change and Food Security (groups raise awareness about and sustain strategies of bio-intensive crops with vegetables and herbs).

* Workshops on culture of peace with children (raising awareness of non-violent toy to help a Culture for Peace).

* Workshops on Human, Environmental Rights, and women. (To achieve a just and egalitarian healthy community).

* Expansion Project Labor Grail (break new ground in other contexts especially indigenous and black women).

* Establishment of productive projects with emphasis on Economic Issues (promoting the construction of an awareness that the chances of survival of micro consolidation in the popular sectors are in their collective grouping form).

Responses to the Editor's questions, *Grail Mexico*

How are we are "strengthened by the compassionate energy and creative action of women" as it says in our International Vision Statement?

It strengthens us all the work we do within the group, and the diversity of projects that each of us develop in a collective learning process. We basically share that we live and learn in our working places, in our professional studies, in cooperative projects, and also in those projects with other political and social groups. In addition to this, it strengthens us the commitment of each of us with other groups of women and networks. We are talking about the unconditional love to our social activity, walking hand in hand with other women in hopes of a better, kinder, fairer world. It is easy to understand that we are strengthened by the compassionate energy: because we are not alone, because we walk together.

We come from families where the strength of women was always present and our parents instilled the value of compassionate energy, as part of our daily lives. In addition, we all believe in the power of inspiration trough rituals where we try to understand more deeply the situation of our country, poverty (whether it is in the body or soul) AND asking for having strength from the Spirit, inspired in the strong women, in the past and in the present time of our Grail Movement.

We work with women and girls, exploring "its-our" concrete situations in order to know the meaning of their contribution to the family and the whole society in different areas of women's life situations. This way when we gather, we always highlight the enormous value of our contribution, our achievements and their impact.

Are we working specifically with women and girls to explore and celebrate their unique contribution to society and the world?

We are working with everyone, so that we contribute to achieve an egalitarian society. We especially work with women and girls in conditions of inequality so that we join in an organized manner from our work areas, looking for appropriate strategies to make effective our work by means of integrated and organized actions, recalling that girls and women need space to fully develop. Such spaces are designed for them, and this way we contribute to generate both sensitization and consciousness of the aspects that strengthen us as human beings and also as a society, including a whole care of the environment, as well as promoting equality, justice, participation, and transformative education.

Earlier we work with girls and young women in the state of Guanajuato, mainly on the issues of gender and personal empowerment (self-esteem, life planning, culture of peace, etc.) through storytelling, art and body movement workshops. As an example, there is currently an experience in the Mixteca region of Oaxaca, involving activities among children, which aim to encourage the reflection that is represented in their drawings and art, and also aims to develop proposals with gender perspective that may be presented to the local indigenous authorities.

Are we grappling with inequality, mistreatment, and disregard for women still so present in our times?

In our society, in our daily work, every moment, in every area, in every home, in every community, in every job… we face inequality, discrimination and violence against women. This is why our concrete participation focuses on education for us as women to know our rights, places where we can go for help, for legal and psychological counseling, and also to learn how to identify expressions of explicit or "disguised" violence so that we set limits when they occur.

Another way to work is to seek autonomy and dignifying job options in the labor sector, basically, we are talking about the creation of social enterprises, such as the cooperatives formed by women, where the members are trained to be financially independent and not rely on their partners or parents. Economic independence facilitates the building of self-esteem, as well as the process of fighting for our rights and

demand better living conditions. As mentioned earlier, the diversity of activities that we carry out and follow-up as women who integrate the north-south division of the Grail in Mexico, strengthens us as a team of the Grail throughout Mexico.

We learn, we study and we inform about the current situation of women in the world, especially in our country, which is our place of action. We do this while we reflect on the needs and problems we face, and also while we identify our resources and strengths.

When we know the concrete expression of violence, we devise ways to fight against it through actions ranging from the protest (joining our voices to others), the design and also the delivery of workshops and programs that build both self-esteem and the search for equity; besides all this, we also participate in the elaboration of proposals that are aimed to families and various levels of authority.

Last but not least, we also fight against the invisibility of women, the invisibility of their strengths, their work, their achievements, and their contribution to society, as it happens every day with women from indigenous groups and rural areas, and those that are workers, students, mothers, teachers, etc., all of them from a wide spectrum of socioeconomic conditions.

Sacred Activism Summer at Cornwall 2015/Justice and Joy, *Lucy Jones, USA*

For three weeks this summer, the Grail at Cornwall was transformed into a 24/7 International gathering of young women from nine countries around the world. With the help of 36 volunteers, the 4 staff and residents of the Center hosted these world travelers and sacred activists to explore the core principals of the United Nations Sustainable Development goals. The Bronx Grail also played a key role in hosting participants before and after the program, making airport runs, and leading program pieces. The NYC Grail supported a trip to the United Nations and a seminar at the Church Center of the UN, followed by a community meal. The National Grail supported participation by two Ecuadoran young women. Individual donations as well as contributions of time and talent helped to make the residential experience possible. The International Grail carried the greatest responsibility to support the housing, travel and meals for these twenty women to create a program of formation in Grail values of “justice and joy.”

<u>Front row, left to right</u>: Salome Pondangu (Papua New Guinea), Catarina Jardim Matos (Portugal), Carolina Basto (Portugal), Blanca Verónica Guaján Sánchez (Ecuador), Palesa Radebe (South Africa), Nina Hendricks (South Africa), Coline Bruintjies (South Africa)

<u>Back row, left to right</u>: Naomi Rose Paime (Papua New Guinea), Mayarit Johely Gallardo Vergara (Mexico), Josephine Vidler (Australia), Sofia Tobar Cisneros (Ecuador), Allison Weiss (USA), Ailsa Paterson (Australia), Fidência Ernesto Moreira (Mozambique), Regina de Paula (Brazil, staff), Anna Carolina Campos de Paula (Brazil), Flávia Olimpia Jose Duvane (Mozambique), Flavia Aparecida da Silva (Brazil)

<u>Not pictured</u>: Vanessa Alves (Brazil), Nonhlanhla Kubheka (South Africa), Lisa Petro (USA)

Justice and Joy—International Day of the Girl 2015, *Lucy Jones, USA*

Sparks were flying up from Maputo and Beira in Mozambique, Lisbon and Madeira in Portugal, Capetown and Johannesburg, South Africa, in Australia, Ecuador, Brazil, Mexico, Papua New Guinea and New York. On October 11, 2015, the fire that was stirred in Cornwall spread to these lands as program participants celebrated and initiated projects for the International Day of the Girl.

This is the fourth year that the United Nations sponsored the focus on issues that specifically affect girls around the world. The day promotes girls' human rights, highlights gender inequalities that remain between girls and boys and addresses the various forms of discrimination and abuse suffered by girls around the world. The Working Group on Girls, a consortium of Non-Governmental Organizations, including the Grail, sponsored a Day of the Girl Summit at the UN on October 9. The Girls Speak Out event was held at the UN ECOSOC Chamber from 3 to 5 pm. (http://dayofthegirlsummit.org/idg-2015/)

In schools, churches, community centers and Grail houses, and in online digital campaigns, our "sacred activists" have raised awareness and the call for action on issues of equal educational opportunities for girls, the dangers of early marriage, and the destructiveness of violence on girls. They created space for girls to tell their own stories and experiences as girls. They heard from women about opportunities and were inspired by each other's strength and ingenuity. They danced and sang and prayed, finding joy in solidarity and visibility. They celebrated being female together. They committed to working for girls' rights in their own homes and communities.

From the editor "The following four articles are from participants of sacred activism and international day of the girl 2015 programs."

How We Work with the World *Lisa Petro, USA*

A friend of the Grail and Sacred Activism Participant 2015

The work of women in the world is defined through the balance of past, present, and future; strength and wisdom from generations of women before, mindfulness of current challenges, and commitment to goals that reflect inclusiveness, sustainability and opportunity. At the fulcrum of our work is unity, the point in which all elements of past, present and future come together in harmony. The Grail, not only as a symbol of life and wholeness, is also a space where all women of the world can work within that point of balance to achieve our shared goals.

In the summer of 2015, The Grail Center at Cornwall-on-Hudson in New York, USA, invited girls and women from 9 countries to live and work together during the Sacred Activism Program. The focus of our work was related to the Sustainable Development Goals in 2016. Each day for 3 weeks, members within the international Grail community facilitated work sessions to explore how far women have come, what new and continuing challenges we are facing, and in what ways can we work together to reach our goals. Across cultural gaps, we shared about the difficulties women face in our communities, our own visions for change, and grew deep connections through empathy and understanding. A common language was born through our experience, rooted in the commitment to our work and mutual empowerment.

As we have moved onward, each of us has taken a stand for one or more of the Sustainable Development Goals. We communicate regularly through social media, email and *WhatsApp,* a dynamic real time application for phones that allows you to communicate via text in any country. We have all created various campaigns for International Day of the Girl on October 11th, 2015, ranging from free community events to digital projects. As each campaign was created, it was shared within the digital community, all of us inspired by each other, and mobilizing our work not just within the host country, but around the globe.

Our unified experience has given way to that pivotal point of balance, where we can all come together to create change in the world, and to be "...strengthened by the compassionate energy and creative action of women." (International Grail Vision). From this space, the work of women is possible.

My Experience in the Summer Program at Grail Centre in Cornwall-New York, *Flavia Duvane, Mozambique*

My name is Flavia Duvane, I am 32 years old and a Grail member from Mozambique. I would like to share with all of you my first opportunity and experience to be part on an International Grail event.

In July, 2015, I joined 20 young women from the four corners of the earth (Australia, Brazil, Ecuador, Mexico, Mozambique, Papua New Guinea, Portugal, South Africa and USA) at the Grail Center in Cornwall, New York for a Sacred Activism Summer Camp where we share, discuss the work we do in our communities and also learning about the global situation and about United Nations.

I had opportunity to share with others presented the Girls Leadership Program, which is run by the Grail in Mozambique where I am part of the team. It is a program that provides, facilitates and instills the means of addressing issues which impede the full growth and development of the girl in all spheres of home, school and community. Its objectives are to promote assertive self-expression, teach important life skills, and allow the practice of leadership in a variety of settings to reach their full potential; to promote the girls' rights and awareness on all forms of violence against girls; and to promote the celebration of the International Day of the Girl (11th October). Also, the other participants share their activities, where we found some similarities and get new ideas.

I can say that it was a very enjoyable experience because it was a great pleasure to get along with everyone and feel very welcome, inspiring by others that somehow created in me a lot of inspiration so I can go out there and be able to fight for what I believe, challenging because it created in me a great desire to go far and pursue my wishes. Even with language barrier, we found a way to people share and give their point of view and ideas to get where they are and also in the same time was very emotional for various personal sharing.

Being able to be in the Activism Sacred program gave me the opportunity to expose my ideas and be heard, and realize also that all are equal and have the same rights and in order to make this equality we must fight hard to achieve desired purpose.

Despite the cultural diversity that existed between us, it was no obstacle so that we could live as a family and made me more aware of the diversity and stand more to my cultural identity. Also, creating in me a great desire to look more on what my sisters were trying to convey.

One of the things that moved me a lot is the simple and smooth way that the facilitators were enabling to expose their subjects/topics, thus making our meetings with great harmonies, emotion and above all great learning experience.

For three weeks that I spent in Cornwall, living with wonderful and friendly people, even with the difference of age between us, which was not remarkable for, I could see and experience the simplicity, harmony, love and mutual affection, the desire to help each and all of this, it is what makes the Grail a so special movement.

Participate in this program, much has changed my self-esteem; on what you have to say, say and do not expect everyone to be happy with your point of view but the most important thing is that you be heard.

Thank you so much the Grail in Mozambique and the International Grail, for the wonderful and memorable opportunity that giving me to participate in the Sacred Activism Program.

The International Grail has shaped my life.....

Sacred Activism, *Nina Hendrix, South Africa*

Before we went to New York, Coline and I met a young mother from Mannenberg an area on the Cape Flats. We were touched by her story and inspired by her wanting to make a change in her community for the sake of her daughter. When we were at the Sacred Activism Summer Camp we made a commitment to do something with the girls in this community.

The area of Manenberg is a township created by the apartheid government in 1966 for low income coloured families as a result of the forced removal campaign. Since then many problems plague the area such as a high unemployment rate, low literacy rate, poverty, rape and abuse. Gang violence is rife and makes Manenberg a pretty dangerous place to go to. On our first visit, we were brave but scared.

We had the support of a woman in the area who is very involved in community development. She offered us the use of her church for our Girl Day. We asked Chanel, the young woman we met to invite girls in her street to come. As I told friends and family about my plans, they wanted to get involved too. My sisters organized a fabric painting activity, and took photographs on the day. A friend in the UK saw my Facebook post and sent money to buy refreshments for the girls. Coline's mom Ruth, organized an activity of clay molding. My mom, Ruth and Ma Elda came to our event to support and help us from the Grail. My husband provided a mic, speaker and music for the day. Coline and I made sandwiches, small cakes and goody bags with donated sanitary towels, magazines and body care products. Now all we needed were the girls. We were so worried they wouldn't come, but they came. And then some more came. And we had enough food and love for everyone.

We opened with the string game we had played in New York with wool. We took the ball, said our name and why we came and threw it across the room to a friend. In the end we were all connected.

Darion, our dancer, got everyone moving by asking the girls to think of one thing they were good at and show an action for it. Such as baking or swimming, etc. Then he performed for us incorporating all of the movements we made. He has amazing strength and is a very talented dancer. He gave the girls a message that each one of

them has something that they are good at and they should work on their talents for themselves and their community.

We then invited the girls to add to a fabric painting of what they want for themselves and their community while some worked on making a symbol out of clay. They had lots of fun. Then we had an open mic session. Many girls were too shy to speak but had expressed themselves on the fabric. We ended with refreshments and socializing. We asked the girls for their phone numbers and if they would like to come to another sharing.

Since then Coline has had another meeting with the girls aged 12-15 and they spoke about what they would like to become one day. She asked them if they had regular meetings what they would like to discuss and we made a list. We are going to be asking some of our friends and Grail sisters to come and speak to the girls in their area of expertise, such as sexual health, motivating yourself and abuse etc. We will also look at the SDG's and plan fun activities and group discussions on those topics.

With some of the money left over from our girl day, we are planning on taking the girls on a small train ride to the sea. We would like to have some poetry reading and some exercises on creating peace within yourself. Many of the girls don't get out of their community and the cycle of teenage pregnancy, drug abuse, unemployment, rape and poverty continues.

What I learned for myself in organizing this day is that these girls really don't have much by way of opportunity, but when we brought them all together, they were strong and they wanted to make a difference. The energy of women together is so inspiring. I love getting to know new people and these girls are so fresh and young, when they speak about their dreams or goals, I think to myself, why not? Although there are so many challenges here there are also so many possibilities. We really didn't think we could do much for these girls. We only wanted to show them some support and solidarity. That we know their lives are tough and we stand by them in their struggle. Now we will see what we can all do together. In Manenberg, Aluta Continua, Aluta Continua, Continua.

http://safecommunities.sjc.org.za/gang-violence-in-manenberg-can-it-be-stopped/

An experience in Mozambique, *Clara Helgesson, Sweden*

My name is Clara. I am 21 years old and I live in Sweden. This summer, I spent six weeks in Maputo, Mozambique. I was there to work with an NGO that I got in contact with through a students network called Aiesec. Since I am involved with The Grail in Sweden, and spent two weeks in New York for the CSW this year, the visit was also a great oppirtunity for me to meet old and new Grail friends in the Grail-centre in Maputo.

Coming to Maputo was a great, but also difficult, experience. Learning how to take the *chapa* (a local bus) to work in the morning took me at least a week. You have to stand at the right place to take the *chapa* and wave one in. But you have to learn where these spots are, since there are no signs available. Getting off is just as hard, and once my first week or so, the *chapa* somehow took a different route. So I ended up in a place I had no recognition of what so ever. After having asked quite a few people in Portuguese how to get back, and taken the wrong *chapa* twice, I finally got back alright.

At the NGO I mainly worked with sanitation. During 1st weeks there, I understood how hard it is to work in the local community, but how *building* the actual toilets is the easy part. The human relations surrounding the project is what takes up most of the time. My supervisor and I had to help resolve conflicts between families

who were supposed to share a toilet. We could spend hours doing this. If this could not be done, the toilet would be build in vain, since they would not care for it properly and it would eventually fall to pieces. I realized that there are no shortcurts when it comes to human relations – you have to meet every person and listen to their needs.

I learned a lot working at the NGO, but I also felt that there was something missing. The work was not very well organized, the workplace was dominated by men and I think there was a lack of women perspective. Maybe I didn´t even know for sure what it was that I missed there, until I met two of my friends from the Grail. I met them the first time in New York during the CSW and they are both young, Mozambican women. As I had lunch with them in Maputo, I was reminded of the kind of comittment and dedication to community work that they have. I felt more inspired taking to them than what I had been during the meetings at the NGO. While I had complained that some of my colleges at the NGO could show up to work very late, one of my friends from The Gral said that she always showed up to work half an hour early. And if the NGO lacked a women perspective – who could know about this better than young women themselves? I think I was reminded of the important work done at The Grail. It wasn´t done for money or because they had to, but because they wanted to and felt the need for it. I much valued my time with them, since I gained new perspectives. I was reminded of the importance of listening to all voices, and not just those in official positions. And most importaintly, I was reminded of the kind of power that can be unleashed when you put a couple of young women in one room and let them speak.

Our work for and as women, *Hyasinta John Mgonja, Tanzania*

Thinking of these theme, it direct tool me to the words of Fr. Van Ginneken our founder who ones said " Come together, girls, young wome" you are needed" you have qualities and tallents you can help change the world" to be an example for everthing." (*History of the international Grail,1921 – 1979)*

But let us think of the Word of God which tells us ..behold, I have given you to trend upon serpent and scopions over all the power of the enemy; and nothing shall hut you."Luk 10 19. So this is our inheritence. We have the power, strength and compassionate enegy. So us our International Vission ststment says God is the center mystery of our giver lives, creater and life giver to the whole universe, beyond us, yet with us, our horizon and beyond our horizon , who colled each one by name and is with us always and in all ways....(The Grail Entering the 21st Century, 2.)

As a faith community of women we have the talents, this is what our founder says once and today Pop Francis remind us to go back and look on our history with gratitude; it would be appropriate for each charismatic family to reflect on its origins and history, in order to thank God who grants the Church a variety of gifts which embellish her and equip her for every good work (cf. *Lumen Gentium*, 12).

Recounting our history is essential for preserving our identity, for strengthening our unity as a family and our common sense of belonging. More than an exercise in archaeology or the cultivation of mere nostalgia, it calls for following in the footsteps of past generations in order to grasp the high ideals, and the vision and values which inspired them, beginning with the founders and foundresses and the first communities. In this way we come to see how the charism has been lived over the years, the creativity it has sparked, the difficulties it encountered and the concrete ways those difficulties were surmounted. We may also encounter cases of inconsistency, the result of human weakness and even at times a neglect of some essential aspects of the charism. Yet everything proves instructive and, taken as a whole, acts as a summons to conversion. To tell our

story is to praise God and to thank him for all his gifts. *(Witness of Joy, the apostolic latter of His Holiness Pope Francis)*

The talents and qualities we have does not create on its own, it is the Gift of the Holy Spirit who works and teaches us always what to do, it is because of the power of the holy Spirit that moves in all that lives (the Grail statement)…God's way is to live by the spirit (Galatians 5:25). It is neither by might nor by power, but My Spirit says the Lord of hosts" (Zechariah 4: 6). It was the Holy Spirit that gave me a hunger for the world of God and desire to live a manner pleasing to Him; this desire does not come from our sinful nature! It was the Holy Spirit that gave us the desire to hear the voice of God, so that we could be a doer of his word (James 1:22). The holy spirit reveals to us the things of God; He is the spirit of wisdom and revelation, The Holy Spirit is God's remedy for the Church and the world; (*Pressing on the holy spirit, by Maria Vadia pg. 32*.)

If we trust the Holy Spirit and let him guides our lives he will continue working with us step by step towards our effort to a words transformed in love, peace, justice and renewal of the earth. So we have talents and qualities we are not alone "God is with us" "behold, I have given you authority to tread upon serpents and scorpions and over all the power of the enemy; and nothing shall hurt you. Luke 10:19. Who our enemies in this contemporary world? Is it rape, human trafficking, FGM, poverty and others problems; we have to step on them.

War, sexism, poverty, contempt, family problems, hunger and disease are among the major problems which humiliate women living in the world's least developed countries; things that also promotes sexual harassment and abuse committed in the walls of the family. The Pontifical Council of justice and peace in collaboration with the International Federation of Women for life and family, WWALF with the Federation of the Association of Women Catholics Fund, WUCWO, starting on 22 up to date on May 24, 2015 engages the international conference that was being discussed about sustainable development priorities after 2015, to check collateral and the role of women in the implementation of these strategies.

The Holy Father in the message he wrote to Cardinal Peter Turkson, President of the Pontifical Council of justice and peace, congratulated the Catholic women for standing up and providing input into the implementation of sustainable development strategies according to the instructions of the United Nations. He calls us to proclaim the Gospel of life, to fight poverty and all forms of neo-slavery; against violence and injustice foundation for women in various parts of the world.

Women grappling with various challenges in life and their mission; sometimes they are forced to make difficult choices between work and family, killed and abused. Women in the undeveloped world are carrying the burden of finding water and some of them died while giving birth; they abused and sexual harassment; sometimes forced marriages forced against their will. All problems are among the things that are mentioned on the sustainable development strategy after 2015.
His Holiness Pope Francis reminds women that they must stand up to protect and defend the gospel of life, human dignity and respect. Participate actively in the fight against hunger and poverty; abuse and bullying. We should be a fountain of moral principles attached to human dignity; justice and peace.

I had a chance to visit Mukuru slam in Nairobi, Kenya (photo below) this year and this was the situation.

Thinking of women and young girls who are hardly living in these slams in Kenya and other areas, I always fill very pit for them and I find myself to be very luck but in other side I have to work hard to empower them, liberate them and show them the light, it cannot be direct but indirect.

So working specific with women or girls to harness, to explore, to celebrate their unique contributions to society and the world is still a priority to help them grappling with inequality, mistreatment especially in the risks environment like in the slams, and disregards for women which is still problem in the world especially areas with war, mention Democratic Republic of Congo, Middle East, also in the countries where the rapid industrialization is taking place and areas where affected highly with Climate change. In recognizing their unique contribution in the society they can empower themselves and they can work to ensure the world is in peace, love, justice and renewal of the earth. We need to have the courage to say "They have no wine" John 2:3.

A Work Not Finished, *Maureen Tate, USA*

In September of 2015, in the space of three weeks, there was a convergence of events that caused me to reflect upon the Grail's work, as women of faith, and our relationship to the Church. I had just experienced our International Council meeting in Australia. In addition to the agenda at hand, we had wonderful opportunities for ritual, reflection, sharing about our work with women in our countries, and intellectual input such as Allison Healey's presentation on religion of creation and religion of empire. Upon returning home, I was immediately engaged with the Women's Ordination Worldwide (WOW) Conference taking place in my home city of Philadelphia, an international gathering of some 500 women who are faithfully and courageously pressing for the full participation of women in the Catholic Church. The WOW Conference ended with our public prayer witness for women's ordination at the cathedral to mark the opening week of the World Meeting on Families and the anticipated visit of Pope Francis to Philadelphia. As I participated in these gatherings I was aware of questions, hopes and challenges for the Grail in our work with women.

One meaningful moment was a WOW assembly honoring Sr. Theresa Kane, considered one of the founders of the women's ordination movement, who issued a public plea to Pope John Paul II in 1979, calling for inclusion of women in all ministries of the church. In her conference remarks, she mentioned two groups critical in re-

envisioning the role of women in the church that had led to this moment. One was the International Grail Movement! I can't even remember the other group mentioned because I practically fell off my chair and wanted to shout Amen! And then I realized, with great disappointment, that there were only three of us participating in the conference. I found myself wondering what it meant that this was *our* moment and we were not in the room.

Some will point out that, particularly in the U.S., we are no longer solely a Catholic movement and this was a Catholic gathering. However, for me, that is not the whole story. This was a gathering of *our* people…ordained women and women theologians who were supported and encouraged in their studies by the Grail, women working for women's rights, women in pastoral and social ministries working with poor women at the fringes of society. The WOW conference exceeded my expectations for the intellectual rigor of the presenters, the intentional inclusiveness throughout, the thoughtful and beautiful Grail like rituals and the groundbreaking theologizing that had our heads spinning. A new model of church was in evidence and I was keenly aware of our absence. One U.S. member, theologian Marian Ronan, conducted a great workshop, "The Unfinished Business of Vatican II: the Ecofeminist Theology of Elizabeth Johnson." I was so grateful and pleased to have her voice and expertise in the mix.

As I reflect on the relationship of The Grail to the Catholic Church, I return to an interest that has grown in me as a result of my experience at the Commission on the Status of Women and awareness of the extreme violence against women in the name of religion. There is undoubtedly a relationship between the full participation of women in institutions of religion and the safety, equality, and well being of women worldwide. Wherever religion dismisses the full personhood of women and their ability to fully image God, it is excusable for men to dismiss women's full humanity as well. Whatever one thinks of the ordination of women, the sacrament of ordination is sign and symbol of religious leadership. There are of course ongoing issues of empire, hierarchy and clericalism at work in our church communities. However, we now know there is no scriptural or theological impediment to the ordination of women and that the Church's stance is steeped in tradition that must continue to be challenged.

I have wondered if those of us who are practicing Catholics recognize this as our unfinished work and consider how we might continue to confront patriarchy and exclusion from ministry in the Church as part of our ongoing commitment to women and girls' equality and empowerment. It is a theological work but also pastoral, social, educational and familial. Are we still modeling a new way of being Church for women that affirms and celebrates their gifts and unleashes their energy for the transformation of the world in the Church as well as in society?

Finally, as I observed the unfolding of events surrounding the World Meeting on Families and the visit of Pope Francis to the U.S. and Philadelphia, I couldn't help but look for ways to relate the previous weeks' experiences. Although Pope Francis made laudable statements regarding our obligations to the poor, the exercise of power in the cause of freedom, the plight of the refugee, the need to welcome and forgive all, there were noticeable gaps. One could not avoid the fact that the model of family life being discussed did not fully acknowledge the realities, that many families and women in particular face, that make the Church's ideal impossible. I fantasized what it would mean for the Pope to use such a forum on the family to talk about the violence done to women in the name of religion and call for all religions to act strenuously to confront and end such violence and discrimination, beginning in its own house. There were so many expectations for issues the Pope could

address, but as commentators noted, women did not appear large on the agenda. Yes, this is a work that is unfinished, putting women squarely on the Church's agenda, not only for the Church, but for women everywhere who, in every way, fully make up the body of Christ.

A Day in Duisburg, *Joyce Minkler, USA*

The working group on "Blessing the Space Between Us" met June 7-14. We were: Bibi Helgesson (Sweden) Martha Heidkamp (USA), Regina Bashaasha (Uganda), Lorna Bowman (Canada), Lucy Kimaro (Tanzania), Christa Werner (Germany), Maria Carlos Ramos (Portugal) and Joyce Minkler (USA). We worked hard and loved the hospitality of the German Grail, first in Ingolstadt for some days of preparation, and later in Mulheim for our full meeting together. Thanks to all of you for making us feel so welcome and taking care of us so well!

On Tuesday, June 9, Silvana Ferraguti, who provided wonderful meals throughout our stay in Mulheim, arranged a day for us to explore Duisburg. We were first greeted at the City Hall by the Lord Mayor of Duisburg, his assistant and the woman in charge of coordinating local woman's programs and outreach in the city. We learned about the incredibly diverse population of the city and the on-going efforts made by city officials to welcome immigrants and help them to assimilate into the culture. All of the efforts to be especially attentive to the needs and capacities of women in the area were inspiring to us. With so much attention on cooperation and service, we came away feeling that Duisburg has much to teach the rest of the world about tolerance and respect.

Then we went to the nearby Protestant Salvator Church for a tour of the beautiful windows and a beginning understanding of the more than one thousand year history of this place. Our tour guide was very responsible to our questions and very knowledgeable. From there we went to an excellent dinner at a local restaurant and then on to explore the Hochfeld Initiative in which the Grail has been involved for very many years.

We were greeted and oriented to this effort by Caroline, a long term staff member of this project. She explained the work with women from many countries who arrive in Duisburg needing help for themselves and their families as they work to adjust. This center provides resources for women and children and opportunities for mutual support and education as new residents reconstruct their lives in a new environment, and a point of reference once families have become established in the community. Again, we were struck by the cooperation involved with other agencies and groups working with the same population and the positive effect of cooperation instead of competition.

Then off for supper and a tour of the large and beautiful Duisburg Mosque, where we heard yet another story of cooperative work among the local residents and newcomers to create such a welcoming place for worship, inter religious dialogue and community support. The story of the growth of this mosque, starting from an on-going, purposeful and long term dialogue among the many different populations in the area, was another inspiring example of how human beings can work together to produce peace and beauty and a deeper understanding of the Holy, when they consciously decide to do so. Our guide at the mosque was a man who was a member of the Little Brothers of Charles de Foucault community, a witness in himself of the depth of the commitment to dialogue that goes on in this mosque.

A million thanks to Silvana for providing us with such a beautiful exposure to such hopeful people and work in Duisburg. The people that we met all have known Silvana and her work in the community for years and clearly

have a great respect for her and for the commitment of the German Grail. We went home inspired and hopeful that transforming our little parts of the world might just be possible!

The Grail in the Philippines 40th Anniversary, *Christine Garinganao and Monica Sophia de Leon, the Philippines*

On October 19 to 29, 2015, the Grail in the Philippines celebrated its 40th Anniversary with the theme "Do Justice. Love Kindness" taken from Micah 6:8. The theme was specifically chosen to resonate with declaration of the Year of the Poor by the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines. Days were spent with much joy, thanksgiving and heartfelt sharing in a community of women who continue to lead meaningful lives inspired by the Grail's mission. We were much blessed to have with us Carla Van Thiel (Netherlands) and Zodwa Mabaso (South Africa, International Leadership Team), who became a source of inspiration as they generously shared their life experiences and advocacies in the International Grail. Not so often women in the Philippine Grail have the chance to meet, listen and interact personally with Grail members from other countries. Indeed, it was more than what each one expected leading to fruitful and meaningful encounters.

A 'bienvenida' dinner was held to warmly welcome Carla and Zodwa hosted by the Manila Group on the 20th of October. Carla and Zodwa spent some time to see nearby tourist sites, day before they travel to Tacloban, Leyte where they met with the women from Eastern Samar, Northern and Western Mindanao. They were joined by Jeanette Loanzon, Monica De Leon, Jeannete Rodriguez and Christine Garinganao, from Manila. The group spent five days at the St. Elizabeth Retreat House, the venue for the 40th anniversary celebration. Arriving in Tacloban, the group passed by historical sites such as McArthur's Park, where General Douglas McArthur led the liberation forces in WWII and the San Juanico Bridge, the longest bridge that connects the province of Leyte and Samar in the Visayas. It can be recalled that Tacloban was the worst hit by typhoon Haiyan (Yolanda) in 2013, November. Carla and Zodwa got a glimpse of a town recovering from the devastation.

The five-day celebration was filled to the brim, beginning with a sharing of Grail personal symbols and stories. Each reflected on the question of what attracted, kept and made you stay in the Grail and what symbol represents one's response.

Carla then talked about the History of Grail in the Netherlands and the significant contributions of Grail all over the world. She described the Grail like a river in different destinations, different cultures, and different ways of living yet coming from the same source, God. It brought each one to a deeper understanding of life in the Grail.

Zodwa then shared about South Africa, specifically their projects on caring for the environment such as Birding Club, Emthonjeni, Snake Workshop, Gardening and other initiatives, such as Workshop with Girls on encouraging action against abduction of girls.

In the afternoon, Carla continued sharing her advocacy on anti-human trafficking and migrants. These are current issues that are dealt with by Grail women in other parts of the world. An interactive session was done afterwards with Zodwa. It was an opportunity to learn more about the International Grail and how it can help our local women to gain more international experience.
Regional reports followed afterwards, where Eastern Samar, Northern Mindanao, Western Mindanao and Manila Group representatives talked about activities conducted and future plans in their respective area. In preparation for the 2020, 45th anniversary, the group was led to a dream session where they brainstormed of what, where and how it will be celebrated. The day ended with a Bibliodrama reflecting on Mark 14:3-9

Other highlights of the five-day celebration were the Opening the Grail Circle, where young women from the local university and *Paglaum* graduates learn more about the Grail. A talk about the environment led by Zodwa engaged the young women into coming up with action plans on how to address current environmental issues both locally and in the global arena. The Grail in the Philippines also welcomed four women who made their commitment during the celebration of the Holy Eucharist. They are Maricor Sotillo, Katherine Lacaya (Western Mindanao), Teresa Raloso (Guiuan, Eastern Samar), and Joy Madjos (Northern Mindanao). Grail members present likewise had their renewal of commitment, a moment of grace indeed. A light and enjoyable evening was spent in a cultural exchange where each region showcased traditional dances. The team of those from Dolores, Eastern Samar presented a lovely dance, highlighting the country's wealth of resources and tourist attractions.

Before their departure for the airport on 29 November 2015, the Apalit group led by Luz Galang had lunch with Zodwa and Carla. The enthusiasm and joy in this brief encounter was an affirmation of women's potentials for life giving in their own communities. Occasions like these are worthwhile means to deepen and create, in a widely shared sense of community, a new and more intense awareness of our Grail mission, within the frame of our current, contemporary life, always attentive to the signs of the times, growing in faith, and making significant contributions to the society. Belonging to the Grail has been highlighted in a deeper way and in the narration of a collective story that we love and each day live. Inspired by the words of Fr. van Ginneken, let our prayer always be, "Lord, let me grow into what you have created me for."

Report from Egypt, *Anna-Maria Ahlén, Bibi Helgesson and Kerstin Jacobsson, Sweden*

We in the Swedish Grail never got the chance to meet Simone Tagher but we have heard the stories about the Grail work in Egypt many times. And so we wanted to share with your some recent – and really powerful - experiences from that country.

In November, Kerstin, Anna-Maria and Bibi travelled with a group of 15 people from Sweden, led by a vicar from Stockholm, Gunnar Lind, who has worked as priest (Lutheran) in Egypt for 7 years and knows the country well and many people there. We travelled in a small bus, starting in Luxor and ending in Cairo. We did see some 'touristic things', such as faraonic temples and the Valley of the King, took boat tours on the Niles, visited the museum in Cairo, old Cairo, weaveries, etc. However, our main aim with the trip was to visit ancient monasteries in the desert – the cradle of monastic life! – we saw 15 of them in total. The oldest of them, St Antony's monastery, is from the 4th century and is still active. Wherever we came, we were very well received

by representatives of the Coptic-Orthodox Church all over the country, with whom Gunnar Lind and other Swedes have entertained good relationships for decades. What impressed us deeply – apart from their hospitality - was the social projects and educational work run by the Coptic church; we visited several training centres for disabled children and one school, with children from both Muslim and Christian background and boys and girls together (St Minas in El Qoussia). The school is a peace project for future leaders of the community in an area ridden by conflicts. The philosophy goes: you don't fight those you have been playing with as a child. We found the thinking behind all those projects so progressive and forward-looking.

Thus we really met with the vibrant and visionary work of the present Coptic Church. Another thing that impressed on us, from the secularized North, was that they build so many new churches and even cathedrals in Egypt today. Another place of hope is the retreat farm Anafora north of Cairo"! It is started by Bishop Thomas, who is a most remarkable man, both spiritually and in his commitment to social justice and human development. In Anafora the desert is turned into vegetable gardens and orchards. People also flourish. In this part of the world women don't use bicycles, but in Anafora the nuns do! At Anafora they have also started an adult education centre for girls and others with low education, in part modelled after Scandinavia. Volunteers as well as guests are welcome from everywhere to come and stay at Anafora, to help out with work, get to know new people or just to rest. During the revolution they took the opportunity to build a new (underground) church in Anafora. The walls are all covered with icons. Coptic mass and an evening prayer is held everyday. It struck us that Anafora must in part be what Grailville and Tiltenberg were in 'the old days'. It was comforting to us and hopeful, and we even think that there might be interest among Egyptian Coptic women to get to know the Grail….

If you get curious, google Anafora Egypt and you will see pictures from and get a flavor of this wonderful place.

The icon on the top is from the new-built church in Anafora. In the West we talk about the escape/the flight from Egypt, in the Coptic church they see it from the other perspective: they talk about the arrival to Egypt and how these strangers were received with open arms. According to this tradition they embarked on a boat and sailed to Upper Egypt, where they stayed more than three years. As the political climate in Europe is turning cold, may we be inspired by this old and much cherished tradition of identifying with and welcoming refugees!

Tell your stories, *Ine van Emmerik, the Netherlands*

This year, tell the story, the ILT wrote to us at All Saints. Stories about the Grail from beginning until now. *Don't skip over the years in between, and don't skip over the hard parts. Talk about the characters involved, what they were like and what happened to them. Talk about the passion for justice that drove them and the Spirit who led them,* the letter said. In last Crossroads, I told the story about the Dutch Grail, about new shoots to the old Grail tree through our history project. I promised to tell more about a project on active pluralism that the Dutch Grail is supporting by enabling me to work for it.

What? Active pluralism? That sounds like very abstract, academic term, and it is. But essentially, the basic thought is dangerously simple. That is that every living person on this planet has her or his own unique story about life, simply because she is unique. We find that rather straightforward but living it is much more difficult.

We may be willing to acknowledge that diversity, but we may easily miss the fact that we are also diversity within ourselves. It is all well to say: I am tolerant, I grant you the freedom to be who you are, to have the beliefs that you have. But is that really living together? Living together means meeting and sometimes disagreeing with each other. Conflict often coincides with human development and growth. What to do when beliefs and the practical consequences of it are conflicting? The challenge for us humans is to do this in a peaceful, non-violent way. In a fast and pluralistic world we need to develop and share new practices to do so. In other words: we need to develop an **active** attitude and practice to face **pluralism.** This requires solid academic thinking and practice, both.

Luckily, there is always a rich tradition that can help us, with simple and effective practices. Like: tell me your story! Creating room in time and space to sit and listen to each other's stories, we have done so as long as there is Grail. Listening to the story of the other not only learns me about her, but just as much about me. That is why I started with a very practical form of active pluralism, a language café for refugee women in the Grail house. One of the organizations in the Netherlands that is counseling and training refugees to integrate into Dutch society is Foundation Refugee Work. They found this a great idea and were willing to cooperate. A few weeks ago we started with a small group of six women that already follow language training with Refugee Work. For them, this café is a space for further language practice and formation. Reading stories, practicing Dutch, sharing knowledge and fun. It is as if the world is living together around one table.

Vacancy, chairperson for the Grail Capital Board Foundation

The ILT is seeking a qualified individual to fill a vacancy on the Board of the Capital Foundation when Hellen De Wit's term ends this spring. If you are interested or know of a good candidate please contact the ILT through Mary Omedo at the International Secretariat [iltsecr@grail.org] or the International Finance Officer, Mary Farrell [mkf@puck61.net]

In Loving Memory, Anne Hope by *Sally Timmel, USA*

Anne Hope (February 12, 1930 - December 26, 2015)

Anne Hope, co-author and founder of the classic Training for Transformation books and training programmes, passed on in an interfaith intentional community in Claremont, California on December 26, 2015.

Anne Hope was born and grew up in Johannesburg South Africa. She attended Rhodes University in Grahamstown South Africa with a degree in English literature and history. She then received her masters degree in education from Oxford University in England. During her university days, she immersed herself in the Catholic Student movement and not only became convinced of the horrors of apartheid, but became more and more committed both emotionally and spiritually to the struggle for liberation.

In the late 1940's Anne kept on meeting members of the international Grail at student conferences. She became intrigued with this lay women's Catholic movement, and soon was invited to be part of the Grail community for a year, at their center in Loveland Ohio outside of Cincinnati. The one year turned into four years where she became part of the staff. Anne then went to teach and also be the headmistress of the first high school for girls in Kalisizo, Uganda. This was where Anne first became passionate committed to working with women's groups and community development. Anne returned to South Africa and was soon appointed president of the Grail in South Africa.

In 1969, Anne was awarded a World Council of Churches scholarship to study at Boston University in Adult Education and Human Relations Training. It was there that she met Sally Timmel who was in the same course. Anne had heard of the brilliant work of Paulo Freire, a Brazilian educator who developed a methodology call conscientization [or critical awareness]. Paulo had come to Harvard University at that time to be at the Institute for Social Analysis. Anne and Sally then began integrating the critical analysis approach of Freire into participatory methods. They applied some of these tools in anti-racism work through the USA National YWCA, which at that time had taken on a One Imperative: to eliminating racism wherever it exists and by any means necessary. Anne and Sally developed and ran a number of workshops called White on White [as racism is a 'white problem'].

Anne returned to South Africa in 1971 when her USA visa ran out and Sally joined her in neighboring Swaziland. There Anne and Sally helped develop a literacy programme with a Swazi NGO supported by UNESCO. After nine months the South African police caught up with them and they were made prohibited immigrants.

Anne began working with the Christian Institute, a prophetic witness that proclaimed apartheid a sin against humanity. During this time, Anne was asked by Steve Biko, the founder of the Black Consciousness Movement, to work with their leadership for six months on participatory methods of Paulo Freire. Soon after the training, most of the leadership were imprisoned, and she was advised to go into exile to continue the work or face imprisonment. Later, Steve said that there were two people who shaped his life, a nun in 6th grade and Anne Hope.

This was the essence of Anne: she brought out the best side of a person – through encouragement, delight, affirmation and challenge. Her vision and intuitions were something one could not ignore as they were spot on. Her challenges were constructive but brutally honest.

One year after her return to South Africa, the apartheid government seized Anne's passport and later denied her entrance back into her homeland for 17 years. Fortunately she had an Irish grandmother which was sufficient grounds to get an Irish passport for those years in exile. Anne and Sally again teamed up and began working for the Kenyan Catholic Bishop's Conference through the Development Department. Working in then the 10 of 13 dioceses, they trained over 500 community development leadership who in turn, within 10 years, reached over 3 million people in multi-faceted projects from literacy, women and youth groups, agriculture and ranching groups.

In 1981 Anne and Sally moved to Washington DC, USA where Anne worked first with the U.S. Returned Missionary Association and then the Jesuit Centre of Concern. Anne also returned to southern Africa to work

with the Zimbabwe Council of Churches. Sally joined her for a year where they wrote and had published their classic books called *Training for Transformation*. These four volumes still sell quite broadly and have been translated into Spanish, French, Portuguese and Arabic.

When the apartheid government announced in February, 1991 that exiles could return, Anne came back to take up a temporary post at the University of Cape Town Adult Education Department. She then moved on to initiate a women's training program [DELTA] and founded the Grail in the Western Cape. In 1999 with Anne's leadership the Grail purchased a residential retreat and conference Center in Kleinmond and three years later, developed a one-year in-service Training for Transformation Diploma course for international teams of women. Over 350 have graduated from this program and it continues to grow from strength to strength. Participants come from as far reaching as Indonesia Papua, Korea, India, Sudan, Nigeria, Uganda, Tanzania, Kenya, the UK and most southern African countries.

Anne was a global citizen and activist *par excellence* with an ability to see a positive 'way out' of the quagmires of injustices. Her insights and voice came from the deep core of her being as she tried to act on these essential elements of goodness, truth and beauty. This core was nurtured by an incredible self-discipline of daily meditation, yoga, and reading for two hours before rising. Her spirit will continue to inspire generations to come.

Reprinted from Gumbo USA, January 2016

In Memory of Anne Hope by *Sally Timmel*

We have
delighted in her,
struggled with her,
laughed with her,
danced with her,
mourned with her,
wept with her,
saw new beginnings with her,
jumped with joy with her,
created with her.

But ah …. Now she will be within us
With more vigor than we had before
More commitment than we had before
More focused on that guiding star than we had before
More outraged than we were before
More kindness than we had before
More compassion than we had before.
More graciousness than we had before.
More grace-filledness than we had before.
More warmth than we had before.

Poem written by Sally Timmel