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 Grail sisters all over the world,

Greetings to you all! Six months ago when the previous issue of Crossroads reached you, the International Leadership Team began traveling. From South Africa, Zodwa traveled to Portugal, Ireland, Italy, Denmark, the Netherlands; and she will soon go to Tanzania. From the USA, Marian spent time in Uganda, then Portugal, Germany, Belgium and the Netherlands. From her home on Madeira Island, Maria Carlos traveled to Mozambique, the Netherlands, Portugal proper, Germany, Canada and the USA. While in New York, Maria Carlos participated in the huge People's Climate March along with many US Grail members.

All these experiences have been opportunities for us to learn the concerns of Grail members living and working in those countries. Twice we have had the chance to interact with younger and newer Grail women in International Formation programs – Marian in Uganda, and all three of us in Portugal. Our thanks goes to all the members of the teams that carried off those programs and provided support to us and to the participants. Maria Carlos says she is still energized by seeing the commitment of Grail members gathered and marching in New York.

As a result, we begin this new year with grounded hope and confidence in the ability of the Grail movement to face the future unfolding before us. Throughout the world we live in, the Grail is confronted with fanaticism and conflict, brutality against women and girls, drought and hunger – and yet we find Grail women with courage and stamina. We are learning more about the concrete support that Grail members in one country are giving to those in other countries. Heartened by the depth of spirituality that impels Grail women to action for peace and justice, we are grateful that the community as a whole is still listening to the Spirit. We are encouraged especially by the energy of young women of strength and character who are still finding the Grail, wanting to build a future with us.

May the new year bring us all a new surge of hope and courage, and may our work be Spirit-filled.

Marian, Zodwa and *Maria Carlos*

From the Editor *Carol Siemering, USA*

Dear Sisters

The theme of this Crossroads is from these words in our Vision Statement

Born in the Catholic tradition, the movement is grounded in the Christian faith and challenged by the radical call of the teachings of Jesus. Today, we are women of various religious traditions and on life-giving spiritual journeys. We recognize that in each of our Grail countries, our expressions of faith, religion and spirituality reflect our own realities and cultures. We respect and acknowledge these differences.

I do understand that for some, putting into words the complex realities of the statement seemed better expressed face to face, rather than in an article in Crossroads. I am very grateful for those of you who were willing and able to share.

Como expressamos nossa espiritualidade, nossa fé, as nossas tradições…*Graal Mozambique*

A maioria das participantes do Graal-Moçambique é católica, havendo 4 participantes (17%) de outras denominações cristãs. Além da religião cristã professada do modo como o ocidente nos fez chegar, somos crentes e praticantes da nossa Religião Tradicional Bantu. Que tem fé em Deus único, o mesmo que o dos cristãos, porém a forma de "falar com ele" ou de rezar é realizada por intermédio dos nossos antepassados. Cremos em Deus, mas cremos também nos nossos antepassados que são o elo de ligação entre nós e Deus. Somos ambivalentes do ponto de vista da crença. Quando rezamos no Graal, umas vezes somos completamente cristãos, mas noutras vezes somos impelidos a realizar uma série de sincretismos religiosos, especialmente nos dias em que integramos amigos ou convidados de outras religiões.

Para além das raízes e princípios cristãos comuns que temos no nosso grupo, um dos factores de união na forma como expressamos o "espiritual nas nossas vidas" está relacionado com aspectos da nossa cultura, das nossas tradições, da forma como vivemos e sentimos a família, pois na Religião tradicional Bantu determinados antepassados ou alguém mais velho ou com estatuto de mais velho é quem tem um papel preponderante no momento em que vivenciamos a nossa espiritualidade. Estes aspectos são transversais a todas as crenças e "expressões do espiritual" e abrem espaço a um entendimento intrínseco e a uma partilha natural, mesmo entre pessoas que professam denominações ou religiões diferentes.

A forma como expressamos a nossa fé está intimamente relacionada com o sentido de união com Deus e com os nossos antepassados, em todos os momentos das nossas vidas. A fé na "vida após morte", na veneração aos antepassados e aos "santos"; "santos" considerados sempre no sentido católico, porque nas nossas tradições esse conceito não existe. Nem esse, nem o dos anjos, pois quem nos protege são os nossos antepassados. O equivalente a "santos" e anjos são os nossos antepassados, aqueles especiais, os que atingiram esse estatuto. Não basta morrer para se ascender à essa categoria. Diríamos que a nossa veneração passa pela ambivalência, na maior parte das vezes, assumindo assim, no nosso meio, um sentido completamente natural.

Em geral, as nossas famílias, nas nossas casas, não são constituídas só pela "família nuclear de casal e filhos", mas integram vários outros membros. O sentido de comunidade/família alargada está também implícita na forma como manifestamos a nossa fé, pelo que a reflexão em "comunidade", a oração partilhada e a sua integração directa com a nossa vida quotidiana, são formas privilegiadas por nós. A expressão oral com a "divindade", partilhada com os "irmãos" é uma forma muito comum e natural. A "vida de Igreja" (independentemente de qual seja), o sentido eclesial, é natural, como extensão das nossas vidas familiares.

Toda a nossa vida é muito interpretada por meio de histórias, parábolas e expressões simbólicas em geral. Assim, a manifestação da nossa espiritualidade passa também pela incorporação de diversos símbolos, sinais, dramatização e movimentos, pelo que as nossas celebrações envolvem, naturalmente, rituais e símbolos variados, independentes de religiões específicas, o que possibilita um espaço de partilha e de união. Exemplos disto são a utilização de símbolos como a capulana (um pano tradicional multi-uso, que todos os moçambicanos incorporam nas suas vidas), o pilão, a água, a terra, sementes, velas, etc.

A expressão da nossa fé é uma extensão natural da nossa vida, pelo que os símbolos e gestos de expressão corporal do dia-a-dia são também aqui integrados. Os cantos, as danças, os aplausos (que em muitas culturas não são tão naturais durante uma celebração religiosa!), a alegria, a tristeza, a expressão física das angústias, etc., fazem parte da nossa forma de vivenciar a espiritualidade, tal como fazem parte doutros aspectos da nossa vida.

How do we express our spirituality, our faith, our traditions… *The Grail Mozambique*

The majority of The Grail-Mozambique participants is Catholic, having 4 participants (17%) from other religious denominations. Besides the Christian religion, professed the way the West passed it on to us, we believe in and practice our Traditional Bantu Religion. That religion believes in a single God, the same as the one of the Christians. However, the way of "talking to him" or praying is made through our ancestors. We believe in God, but we also believe in our ancestors that are the link between us and God. We are ambivalent in terms of creed. When we pray at The Grail, sometimes we are completely Christians, but sometimes we are impelled to carry out series of religious syncretism (joining of two seemingly contradictory ideas or beliefs) , especially on the days that we integrate friends or guests from other religions.

Besides the common Christian roots and principles that we have in our group, one of the factors of union in the way that we express the "spiritual in our lives" is linked to aspects of our culture, our traditions, the way we live and feel the family, because in the traditional Bantu Religion, some ancestors or the eldest person or a person with status of elder are the ones who play a major role in the moment that we experience our spirituality. These aspects crosscut all religious beliefs and "expressions of the spiritual" and open the space for intrinsic understanding and a natural share, even with people that profess different denominations or religions.

The way we express our faith is closely related to the sense of union with God and with our ancestors, in all moments of our lives. The belief in "life after death", in the veneration towards our ancestors and "saints"; "saints" always considered in the catholic sense because in our traditions this concept does not exist. Neither this, nor that of angels because it is our ancestors who protect us. The equivalent to "saints" and angels are our ancestors, the special ones, those who reached that status. It does not suffice to die to reach that category. We can say that our veneration passes through the ambivalence, most of the times, assuming in our environment a completely natural sense.

In general, our families, in our homes, are not only made by the "nuclear family of couple and children", but include various other members. The sense of community/extended family is also implicit in the way we profess our faith. Thus, the reflexion in "community, the shared prayer and its direct integration in our daily lives are ways that we prefer. Oral expression with the "divinity", shared with the "brothers" is a very common and natural means of expression. The "church life" (regardless of its nature), the ecclesial dimension, is natural, as an extension of our family lives.

All our life is very much interpreted through stories, parables and symbolic expressions in general. Thus, the expression of our spirituality also passes through the incorporation of various symbols, signs, dramatization and movements. Thus, our celebrations naturally involve various rituals and symbols, regardless of specific religions, what enables to have a space of sharing and union. Some examples of this are the use of symbols like

the *capulana* (a traditional multiuse cloth that the Mozambicans incorporate in their lives), the mortar and pestle, water, sand, seeds, candles, etc.

The expression of our faith is a natural extension of our lives. Thus, the symbols and gestures of daily life expressions also integrated therein. The singing, dancing, clapping of hands (that in many cultures are not so natural in a religious celebration!), the joy, sadness, the physical expression of anguishes, etc. are part of our way of living the spirituality in the hey are also part of other aspects of our lives.

Translated by Manuesse Mocumbi

Reflections on the Vision Statement, group from the Grail Center Kisekibaha - *The Grail Tanzania*

We would like to share our views on the Vision Statement. We agree with what the Vision statement expresses; that we respect our differences on how we express our faith internationally, but in The Grail Tanzania we are very strong Catholics for the following reasons.

1. Our Catholic faith is still very young compared with other countries.
2. We all joined the Grail Movement because it was a Catholic Movement originally.
3. Our family members and friends know and respect us because of what we can share with them from the Catholic tradition.
4. We are collided and shaped by Catholic faith.
5. We have something as Catholics which is not easy to share with other religions such as the church Sacraments, the Holy Eucharist.

We recognize and acknowledge the presence of Grail Women of various religions traditions internationally but not nationally. Our life giving Spiritual Journey is based on Catholic Traditional (Faith); living the Bible in our daily life, by meditating the word of God every day, monthly reflection, yearly retreats, praying the Divine Office, celebrating Holy Eucharist daily, reconciliation, pilgrimage, adoration of the blessed Sacrament, personal prayer, sharing our talents, attending and conducting seminars and workshops, community living, celebrating life together e.g. birthdays and all saints, in solidarity with each other in times of difficulties etc.

How we express our faith in our country, is according to our realities as we cannot understand the terms in the vision statement which says. " Today we are women of various religions traditional and on life-giving Spiritual journeys". In Africa today there are many things and terms spoken by the people that are not clearly understood by many as they are connected with Satanism or devil worship. When you talk about different spiritual paths it is not easy for the people to welcome them but they will take time to go through it. The same is true to us Grail members in Tanzania- we need time to work on the terms and help others to know them well before we accept them.

We express what we believe as our true faith our daily living express our faith, our service to the people in a special way Women, children and the poor. We belong to the whole society we live with. We work with people of different religions respectively but they are not aiming to join the Grail Movement because for them it is losing their direction of what they believe is good. On our side, accommodating other faiths is not yet active and it is not our aim to accommodate them but work with them, directing them and sharing what is common to us all as God's loved children. No one should lose but all gain what we treasure.

We are called to work and share our talents with each other equally, and love each other. Mark. 12:30-31.

We express our faith through actions James; James 2: 1-24 Faith comes true when is practiced and other people benefit from such act of faith. We cannot express what we cannot live with and share with the others in need.

We express our faith by teaching catechesis in schools, parishes, visiting the sick and aged in their family, share with the poor what we have, empowering women and girls with knowledge and skills on how to be self-reliance and fight against discriminative culture and traditions. Empower youth especially girls to be strong future leaders.

Women Gathering in Central America *Monica Maher, Ecuador-USA*

Nelly del Cid from the Grail Explorers Group of Honduras says this about Spirituality:

We meet once a month in a space of silent meditation, of sharing our challenges, achievements and struggles. It is a space of individual and collective spiritual growth and life accompaniment. We are four women who always attend; other women come less regularly. We are dedicated to maintain the space open all women who would like to participate. It is a unique space since we share silence around the chalice, the Grail symbol, the symbol which unites us with Grail women around the world, women we do not know but with whom we nonetheless feel connected.

This is what I would say about Spirituality of our Grail Explorers Group in Ecuador:

The Grail vision of the Open Cup draws women in Ecuador from diverse spiritual practices who are seeking a women-affirming space which is contemplative and compassionate. There is palpable thirst for this open space in which each one shares honestly about what has been most nourishing on her spiritual search. Explorers also share their deepest sources of pain, often discussing death and dying. Many of the Explorers have experienced death or chronic illness of intimate partners or family members. It is fascinating to hear the diverse approaches to healing. Explorers are of a wide variety of national backgrounds... including from Brazil, France, Palestine/Poland, El Salvador and the USA. All are dedicated to transforming themselves while they work to transform the world around them. This social engagement also contributes to the diverse spirituality of our group, including activism in Food Sovereignty, Refugee Rights, Women´s Rights, Prison Reform and Indigenous Rights. Although just three of us from our group have met Grail members in meetings outside Ecuador, everyone loves the fact that we are part of a broader international movement. There is always an energy of excited anticipation when we meet.

Living the Vision Statement *Mary Boyd, Canada*

Writing this brings me back to Advent at Grailville years ago and our beautiful liturgical celebrations. Those days helped me discover the deep meaning of this season as portrayed through the Old and New Testament readings which we celebrated, meditated on and discussed. For me, Advent laid the foundation for the even deeper meaning of Catholic and Christian social teaching." Let Justice flow" Or Luke 3:15 about being nourished by expectation, nourishment we need as we struggle for the transformation of the world. The Catholic roots and Christian tradition is still the most powerful motivator I have found for transformation.

During my years in Africa and back in Canada my commitment to those values grew through praxis and knowledge from the many wonderful social statements on Justice by Synods, Popes and Bishops' Conferences. These statements mobilized us for common actions for Justice and nourished us in the face of adversity and growing corporate control of the world.

One of the many examples of this is the work I am part of as a member of the Canadian Catholic Organization for Development and Peace (D&P). As chair of the Diocesan Council I am in the front lines of actions that attempt to relate to the radical call of the teachings of Jesus. The work we take on brings us in contact with people of many

faith traditions which we work with in solidarity for the transformation of unjust situations along the lines of our Vision statement.

For example, this year our action and education program theme is: *Sow Much Love.* It sounds like a theme we in the Grail might choose given our roots and origins. We are working in solidarity with small farmers and peasants around the world who feed 70 percent of the world's people and yet find themselves up against more and more obstacles and challenges because of the raw power and greed of large corporations.

Our stand is that seeds should not be controlled by corporations. Small farmers are the real stewards. An abundant variety of seeds have been developed over thousands of years through the knowledge of the growers, public research, and natural seed breeding. Farmer access to these seeds is now being taken from them by means of Intellectual Property Rights (IP). Thanks to IP, companies can now patent seeds and gain a monopoly on them, gradually eliminating biodiversity and the right of farmers to save, use and exchange seeds. A recent version of the International Convention for the Protection of New Varieties of Plants (UPOV '91) has been ratified by many countries. In this country the legislation is on the table and we are trying to prevent its approval.

UPOV'91 makes the traditional farming activity of saving seeds for the next harvest an illegal act, punishable by law. Furthermore, the large seed corporations are turning more towards the Global South as the new market. They are being assisted by bi-lateral trade agreements that facilitate entry of these companies by requiring the adoption of UPOV '91 and imposing restrictions on how local farmers use seeds.

Our D&P nation-wide solidarity is expressed through action and education in the form of signed petitions in our churches, addressed to our federal members of parliament,

Given the significance of this action, D&P invited Vandana Shiva to come to Atlantic Canada to participate in several educational events and address the National Annual Meeting of ACORN, the Organic growers and the Food Sustainability Network. I made the trip to Halifax to hear her and participate in some of the actions. As she addressed the huge crowd she turned many times to the large D&P poster beside her and said, "Sow Much Love," that's what it's all about. Love the seeds, love the earth, love the farmers, love the healthy food that grows from those traditional seeds, love the people it nourishes." She underlined that traditional seeds are not inferior to the new seeds.

Vandana shared that half the farmers who grow the food are hungry because the market doesn't work for them. She also stated that the real meaning of GMO seeds, (Genetically Modified Organisms) developed and controlled by the corporations is, "God Move Over." These corporations put toxic substances in the seeds, patent them, declare ownership and claim they invented them. In other words, they claim that they own creation. She underlined that creation is not an invention of the five large agricultural corporations.

There are five global companies that dominate GMO production. Monsanto wrote the seed and agricultural laws at the World Trade Organization (WTO) and Cargill wrote the agricultural trade rules. One of the greatest problems is that the law states that corporations are persons, human beings, and their ability to influence decisions are therefore their right to freedom of speech. So small farmers most of who are women, and whose contribution has not been recognized or valued are being stripped of more of their rights. Women are the founders of domestic agriculture and they along with their male counterparts are calling out for Justice. My theology tells me that answering that call for Justice is a form of prayer and a call that comes from the tradition that founded us and which I believe should not be lost sight of because it sustains many people in the struggle for Justice.

Back in the Global North, I joined members of the Canadian Health Coalition last week to lobby Members of Parliament in Ottawa to underline the importance of safeguarding and improving our universal Medicare. Privatized interests are pressing for more ownership. It was great to hear the MPs mention that they were already

receiving our petitions on seeds. This coast to coast action by D&P is based on the principles of stewardship and of Solidarity. Whoever controls seeds controls the future of farming and our food production. Surely this is a question of Justice a word that the Old Testament authors and Jesus spoke more than any other word.

Metanoia Program Northeast Region of the USA *Carol Siemering,USA*

Come, come whoever you are: worshipper, wanderer, lover of leaving. Though you have broken your vows a thousand times, come, come again come. *Rumi, 13th century Persian Sufi poet*

This beautiful quote became the antiphon for our Metanoia process as it progressed. Metanoia is the title we have given our gatherings at the Grail Center in Cornwall, New York. The word Metanoia is sometimes translated as "a change of heart". This particular process was developed by Cornwall Leadership Team and a group of people from the northeastern part of the United States. Its purpose was to go deeply into our hearts to share, to pray together, to sing (sometimes to dance) and to use our analytical, our spiritual and our creative capacities in exploring themes set for the weekend. These weekends were crafted to explore and celebrate both our diversity and unity.

We began these weekends in 2008. Though at any one time there were usually 18-20 participants, over time, approximately 40 different Grail women from the northeast and as far away as California have participated in these weekends. This process has been modified and used in other regional circles as well. (We have suspended our Metanoia process for the last year and a half to work on the Cornwall Dreamquest: visioning what will be next for the Cornwall center as many of the participants in the metanoia process are participating in that.)

The first year those who joined in this process committed to four weekends where we would explore the beginning words from our Grail vision in the U.S.: "Called by our spiritual values…". We took one weekend to explore each of the words "called", "our", "spiritual", and "values". The following years we met at least twice a year with different themes, such themes for example, as commitment, healing, communion, and communication. As the process evolved, each gathering was planned by 2 or 3 participants from the previous gathering working with one of the Cornwall Leadership Team. Resource materials would be sent out in advance to the gathering. Although there were some variations in what follows, generally we would begin on Friday evening starting with a simple Shabbat or agape. We would then gather in the beautiful Cornwall living room, sharing something we had brought to the gathering around the theme and saying a few words as we placed it on the round altar that would remain in the center throughout the weekend. Saturday and Sunday mornings would offer a space for Spiritual Practices. We would gather in self-selected small groups for such practices as silent meditations, journaling, singing, yoga, etc. On Saturday and Sunday we would begin with a "Soul Moment" , a way for us to

touch the Holy together through readings, prayers, songs. Saturday was a was a time of exploring the weekend's theme with heart and mind and soul and body. Saturday evening was a time of joyful gathering: often singing, telling stories, having an auction of things we had brought for that purpose. Sunday was a reflection on the weekend and always a beautiful and meaningful ritual in the prayer room. The altar that had sat in the living room now sat in the center of the prayer room representing our individual and collective selves. On Sunday we would also choose the theme and who would plan the next gathering..

Was it without struggle and sometimes tears? No, of course not. When we are open and vulnerable as one must be for such gatherings there can be both. But was there joy and laughter. Yes, indeed. And so Grail women were called: Come, come! and we came and our hearts were changed.

SolGaia* News *Lídia Martins, Portugal*

We keep pursuing the goals of this project, trying to demonstrate that there are real possibilities of using new forms of energy and hoping that new lifestyles are possible. Yet, we are continually confronted with well-coordinated, deliberate misinformation about the possibilities of using clean energy such as the sun, the biogas, the tides, and the wind.

It won't be possible to continue with this model of consumption we have become accustomed to, the price of which we insist on ignoring: unnecessary deaths, destruction of land, species, air and water, the main cause of wars and conflicts in the past and also in present times.

Since May, SolGaia has been holding sessions in schools, with scout groups and with families. In the scope of this project there have been activities to raise awareness, to inform and clarify through demonstrations on the use of solar energy adapted mainly to cooking purposes.

We went to different places: Portugal: Coimbra, Golegã, Sintra, Oeiras, Idanha-a-Nova, Alcafozes, Pombal, and Condeixa; Spain: Madrid, Salamanca and three "pueblos" in the mountain of Francia. Two hundred and eighty people participated in the workshops. Among the participants there were, besides Portuguese people, some Spaniards, a woman from Mozambique and two from Uruguay. We feel especially encouraged by a renewed hope in the faith that we can and must **take care of the earth, the people and the environment.**

We propose to mobilize consciences, introducing alternative innovating practices among us. We are not the first. There are countries that have developed responsible activities in this field. We have the examples of Northern Europe, South America, India and parts of Asia and also Uganda, Africa, (where the Grail has had a significant initiative in the use of biogas). Generally speaking we can say that there have been found many solutions at different levels: individual, legal, social and urban.

We believe it is possible and so we want to contribute to A NEW EARTH, FOR A HIGHER QUALITY OF ETHICALLY RESPONSIBLE LIFE FOR A STRONGER SOLIDARITY AND CARE FOR THE CREATION WE HAVE INHERITED

May there be peace on earth
Let us be the ones that are already fulfilling this duty

By the way, have you got any solar alternative in your house / in the building where you live?
Give yourself and the earth a present and be the herald of a new way of living in this world.

**SolGaia is a Grail initiative, in the region of Coimbra, Portugal. It began in 2012 as a preliminary experimental phase. See first article in June 2013 issue of Crossroads*

My spiritual tradition *Mieneke Hage,The Netherlands*

It is with gratitude and happiness that I read the Grail vision.

In my spiritual tradition ("Mennonite" or for the Dutch speaking readers "Doopsgezind") it is unusual to have any common statement. But I realise the value of naming what binds us, thus my gratitude and happiness.

I was brought up in a Mennonite family (my father was the first generation in his family and my mother the second generation in her family). When I was 20 years old I expressed the wish to be baptised and thus became a Mennonite on the basis of my personal testimony.

When I was a teenager (in the 60's) one of my schoolteachers, a Mennonite herself, introduced me to Pope John XXIII. When I talked to Grail members at the Tiltenberg I realised Vatican II was of great importance to the Grail. So in 1980 when by chance (?) I visited the Tiltenberg I heard that world weekends for young people were organised and that people who were not Roman Catholic were welcome, I came – and stayed.

I feel at home in the Grail because the way we are organised: not top down, but more from the ground. And the fact that each country is autonomous. Yes, there are differences, but to listen to each other and trying to understand each other's beliefs makes us stronger. Those of you who have visited me in Leiden and have seen the Mennonite church, will have seen it is a beautiful but very simple church. For me that is home: to see many familiar faces lit by the sunlight streaming through the high windows. I am not always to be found in church on Sunday morning though. I am very inspired by the "uncarved wood" = nature. For me the community is a very important aspect of my faith. This means that sharing a meal as in the agape, can be as inspiring as a Sunday service. There are traditions within the Roman Catholic church which are difficult for me, like the transubstantiation. However in Grail celebrations I can feel part and be moved. Although I am not so good at creating celebrations myself, I am happy others are good at that.

Reflections on the International Grail Formation Program at Golega, Portugal by one Core Team Member—*Lucy Jones, USA*

We Came as Strangers and Left as Sisters—Creating Grail International Community

We came as strangers and left as sisters. We wanted to build a community with everyone as a vital part of its functioning—taking care of basic needs for each other: food, clean clothes, spiritual meaning, playfulness and joy, trusting and opening our lives with each other, giving thanks, celebrating together. We did this day by day, perhaps being transformed along the way.

Some may question if building international community in the Grail is worth all the expense and effort of bringing women from around the globe, providing all that is needed, shelter, food, transportation, programming—all the effort to coordinate visas, flights, and get someone to the right place if she gets sick, the demands of translation and the toll on the local Grail community. Yet, I see so many of the problems the world faces can be attributed to the

lack of community or the breakdown of community. In my country, we are alarmed and saddened by the death of black children by police or neighborhood vigilantes and the lack of accountability. The history of slavery, colonization, and racism is one of destroying communities and distinguishing between different groups for the betterment of one at the expense of the other. It all comes down to refusing to see and believe that we are all part of one family, we are all children of God.

So this little work that we do in the Grail of bringing women together to learn to love each other, to enjoy praying and playing together, and to do so across national (and language!) boundaries as well as within each Grail country, is important work for the transformation of the world.

I see the connections we make with one another as lines of a web that grows with each person that joins. That new person expands the web to all her connections and on it goes, creating something that strengthens the Grail and goes far beyond it. We don't build the connection just to have the connection, but to strengthen our purpose in creating a better world, to work together for women's and girls' rights, care for the earth and all creation, and the release of women's creative energies.

No one can say for sure what it will mean in the future to invest our time, talents and resources into such community building work. But I do know that now when I hear news of events in Angola or Brazil, Australia or Kenya, Paraguay—places I have never been, I am more involved because I have a picture in my mind of particular persons—and the specialness of each. And my feeling for the people of the places I have visited, as rich as they were—South Africa, Mozambique, Germany, Netherlands, Portugal itself—are deeper because of the intense experience living with the Grail women at the Center in Golẽga. For two weeks. I know the same broadening experience has happened to many Grail women who are my elders—Cay or Peg would often ask if I knew this person or that person—as they sought to weave the web larger. Forming the connections between us forms the safety net for the Grail's future and I trust that there were lifelong bonds formed in the month spent in Golẽga.

To see pictures of and from the participants, and comments of participants, there is a Facebook group you can join. It is attached to my Facebook page, so send a friend request to Lucy E. Jones. If any problems, email me at grailconhlucy@igc.org