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

The birds they sang at the break of day, "Start again!" I heard them say.

The line from the Leonard Cohen song "Anthem" might have been written about what the IGA represents for the Grail internationally -- nearly 80 women coming together in Fatima this year to rediscover ourselves collectively and begin again. Having journeyed from the four corners of the earth – actually 21 countries this time – we know we will gather strength and insight from one another.

We'll spend 12 precious days together, carried along by the creativity that moves among us, seeking to understand and appreciate insights that are different from our own, trying to be open to challenges that threaten us in places too comfortable, laughing and singing with one another, enjoying Portuguese food and sunshine.

Ring the bells that can still ring. Forget your perfect offering.

When we are together in Portugal, we bring with us the hopes and energies of all our sisters at home. Knowing very well that we have problems in the Grail, we will focus instead on what we can do rather than what we can't -- carrying forward into a new century the embers of the fire ignited by our founders.

We will reject the fear that we are growing too old to make an impact in the world. We know only too well how much we are needed today with societies at war, with the earth groaning from human abuse. With the help of expert facilitators, we will examine the Grail's mission from a global perspective, and try to make decisions for the common good and for the good of the world. We will remember the ancestors and ask them to lend us their wisdom and their commitment. We will reach out to young women in countries just coming to know the Grail.

There is a crack in everything. That's how the light gets in.

For all our idealism, we realize how limited we are, how imperfect our attempts to transform the world. Yet as women of faith, we are thoughtful enough to see the light breaking through the cracks in old, established ways of thinking and operating. We can celebrate the Spirit that will not leave us to our own devices, but will hold us up and carry us to places we might never have imagined. Whether we look at the UN's Sustainable Development Goals and our own efforts to achieve them, or our struggles with Networks, Formation, or limited financial resources, we know very well there is reason to hope and to persevere.

We are not blind to the challenges that face us, nor to the limitations of time and energy that complicate the best of our intentions. But we journey to the IGA dressed in the many colors of our cultures and languages, determined to search for enlightenment together. Pope Francis said that's what Fatima represents: a mantle of light covering us. May all of us, at home or in Portugal, walk in the light, the beautiful light.

Zodwa, Marian and Maria Carlos

Note from the Editor

The theme of this issue of Crossroads is "How have the creative arts (music, visual, dance, written) been used as Grail in your country to transform and enhance the spirit or in any other way made a connection to the Grail mission?"

We have received many wonderful responses. There are other articles as well as two book reviews. Deidre Cornell's review of Women of Vision: Sixteen Founders of the International Grail Movement is not only a reflection on this marvelous book but a deep look into the Grail's inspiring history. Thank you again to my proofreader Judith Blackburn and our wonderful Mary Omedo who has put it into ***production form****.*

Carol Siemering

Formation Program in Angola *Ticha Vasconcelos* Portugal

January 14th – February 1, 2017

As asked by the International Formation Reference Person and by request of the ILT, I was back in Angola, this time developing a more consistent formation program .It was between January 14th and February 1. A group of around 12 women attended on a regular basis. Two of them were new and declared, at the end, they wanted to become part of the Grail.

The program had an in-depth reflection on key Grail documents – Faith Message, declaration of Vision and Declaration of Mission – which were analyzed and considered within an Angolan context. During the two week program every session started with a brief prayer prepared alternately by one of the participants. A report of activities developed by the group since my last visit was presented on the first day. The monthly meetings were developed alternately in participants'

apartments and included always a moment of prayer prepared by the host. On "Girl's Day," a program/event was developed with adolescents in one of the parishes followed a few days later by a workshop on how to make recycled bags and purses.

The activity "Circle of Trust" used in a previous formation program in Golegã was presented as an ethical standpoint for our work and functioning together. As asked by the group, I presented the legend about the Holy Grail – something alien to their culture. As asked for by the group as well, information about Father van Ginneken and his initial vision for the Grail was given. Throughout the days several symbolic legends were presented as an inspiration for the day. For example, "The Legend of the Rainbow" or "The Rabbi's Gift".

Two other texts were used as individual and group study, and an in-depth discussion was conducted: Rachel Donder's text "Fontes do nosso Dinamismo Graal" (Sources of our Grail Dynamism) and Maria de Lourdes Pintasilgo's text "*O Graal como um Movimento Aberto*" (The Grail as an Open Movement).

As requested by the group, at the end of each day there was a moment of *Lectio Divina* around some of the following New Testament readings: Martha and Mary, Good Samaritan, Prodigal Son, Our Father. Beatitudes, Charity (St. Paul's), Acts' description of first Christian communities.

The last two days of the program were used for further planning, defining areas of investment, organizing, looking for resources, finishing a flyer, and evaluation. The areas of involvement in the community were decided: young girls, abused women, women and health, human rights/women's rights, and cultural initiatives.

The group decided to write a Letter of Intention to the ILT to become a Grail country.

A visit to the local new Catholic Bishop was made to explain what the Grail is as an ecumenical, spiritual Movement, open to different forms of spirituality.

By invitation of ILT, two representatives of Angola were chosen to participate in the Ecuador Formation Program since they couldn't attend July South African Program due to visa problems. However, two Angolans did go to South Africa in December 2016 to work with the Grail in South Africa.

By the end of the program two other women had joined the Grail and one, who had been no longer participating, decided to rejoin the group.

On the last Saturday there was a picnic with families and children at the beach.

A Closing Ritual was created using petals of flowers, lights, and reading Angolan poetry and the Beatitudes.

A Final Comment:

There was rich content, serious engagement, honesty, a sense of commitment, and warm hospitality. It is my opinion that the Intentions Letter is clear. The group is what it is, they will slowly evolve. Most of them already have known the Grail for more than ten years, through Teresinha's travels. They have been meeting consistently for five years. They are now looking for a physical space to make the Grail more visible in Angola. On my part, I only can wish that the Grail in Angola will be recognized soon as part of the International Grail.

Reflection on *the Silent Cry* and Resistance *Agatha Modise* South Africa

As an active participant of the Grail Spirituality Network I would like to share some reflections on the work of Dorothy Soelle, *The Silent Cry*. I am awe-struck by a growing realization in my thinking of the fact that this mysticism and spirituality encompass all aspects of our lives. And as I continue to wrestle with the work of Dorothy Soelle, I am touched and moved by how she articulates many issues I am grappling with and by so doing invites me to contemplate deeper and more earnestly on experiences that are often trivialized and feelings that are considered pointless in the struggle for survival.

For instance, while praying and reflecting on the current uprisings of the citizens at the bottom of the economic heap against the powers that be, for not fulfilling the promise to provide decent housing and other concomitant amenities, which are indispensable in a democratic country, one of Soelle's statements surfaced in my mind: **"To reject the inadequate, not to be satisfied with it, is mystical activity**." So I started, as I often do, paging through her work which is almost always at my bedside or on my desk.

This statement is in the section where she writes about the notion of attention. Actually she cites Simone Weil. What this injected into my reflection on the resolve of the demonstrating citizens of South Africa is that, having concentrated their attention for years on trying to solve a problem and finding themselves no nearer to the solution than they were at the beginning, they have nevertheless been making progress in another more mysterious dimension. They have decided to reject empty rhetoric, in Dorothy's words. "[I]n rejecting inadequate words, we also reject inadequate feelings, images, conceptions, and desires so that in true prayer false desires vanish and other greater and perhaps more mute ones arise."

The communities who are actively opposed to the injustice they are experiencing seem to have chosen to be deaf to the questions that arise when sufferers decide to give full life to their needs, to what they are yearning for, to their deep desires, by resorting to demonstrating, picketing, holding prayer vigils and information sessions.

Many of us have heard the following questions which Soelle cites in her work:

"What's the use of protesting everything which has been decided long ago? Can anything be changed anyway? What do you think you will accomplish? Whom do you want to influence? Who is paying attention? Will the media report it? How much publicity will it have? Do you really believe that this can succeed?"

"Sadly and helplessly," she continues, "many people say, 'I am with you, but this symbolic or real action is of no use against the concentrated power of the others'. Questions and responses like these nourish doubt in democracy, but worse, they jeopardize partiality for life. Behind questions like these lurks a cynicism that shows how powerful the ego is tied into conditions and relations of power."

Disquietingly, the promisers are still continuing to make promises. But hopefully, the current resistance within the country will culminate in the production of a narrative similar to the one Dorothy recounts in Chapter 11 of *The Silent Cry*, subtitled "The Fruits of Apartheid." In this part of *The Silent Cry* Dorothy writes about how life-threatening power is confronted. She refers to the stand that The Friends of Oppressed South Africa took during the fight against the Apartheid government. The resistors of Apartheid in countries outside South Africa, specifically the West, made the faces and identities of South African resistors visible and amplified their voices.

They picketed, stood for people they did not know, to bear their names, refrained from eating the fruits of apartheid. Fruits does not refer to fruit such as in oranges, but also to what South Africa was benefitting from in being economically related to foreign countries through sport, banking, travel agents, the sale of wine, trading in raw and manufactured goods, and a long list of other products and services.

In Memory of Mary Helen Adler *Maureen Tate* USA

Long time member of the Grail in the United States, died April 6, 2017 at the age of 97. Helen graduated from Chestnut Hill College in Philadelphia. Her career was devoted to promoting social, economic, and interracial justice. During World War II she worked at Valley Forge Hospital with wounded veterans and as assistant to the chief medical officer. After the War, Helen worked with Dorothy Day at various centers of the Catholic Worker movement.

Helen met the Grail through Jane O'Donnell at the Catholic Worker in 1946. It was Dorothy Day who sent Helen to the Year School at Grailville for formation and she specifically mentions working with Helen in her well known autobiography, *The Long Loneliness.* Helen then became a lifelong Grail member.

Helen was a Jesuit Volunteer in the 1950's and 1960's working with Fr. Michaelman and Anna McGary at the Gesu Parish in Philadelphia, organizing day camps for children, employment services for the mothers, and improved interracial conditions. She also worked with Philadelphia Older Adult Legal Services and with Catholic Social Services as a community organizer with the Senior Clubs in the Archdiocese. When she retired Helen helped organize the Northwest Philadelphia Interfaith Hospitality Network at Our Mother of Consolation Parish which provided short term housing, meals, and assistance to homeless families.

Helen remained active in the Grail, meeting monthly with the Philadelphia Grail circle until just a few years ago. Although she did not travel beyond Philadelphia for Grail meetings she actively followed all national and international Grail issues with great interest. She frequently hosted international Grail visitors in her home. Helen especially found peace and solitude in Nature. She was an avid walker, bird watcher, and gardener and loved "her" Wissahickon Park, the Peace Valley Nature Center, and Cape May Point.

Commission on the Status of Women *Mary Kay Louchart* USA

Every year the Grail participates in this annual session at the United Nations. For the past ten years, we have been particularly reaching out to girls and young women. Since we do not see this as just a 'one time' time event, we ask the girls to be involved in a 'back home' project where they can share what they experienced during CSW. We also expect the local Grail to welcome the girls to a meeting where they can share. You have already (or will soon) read in the Grail International Newsletter about Ana Barata and Mónica Freitas sharing their CSW-61 experience. Ana and Monica participated in CSW in 2017 and are part of the Graal Girl Effect project in Coimbra, Portugal. Part of Ana and Mónica's presentation during CSW-61 was to share a video they helped produce—they are also in it! We invite you to view this video as another example of the Grail using the arts in various forms. Go to www.YouTube.com and write in *Movimento Girleffect*. Also, pictured here are little 'dolls' (*bonecas*) pins which were made and sold a few years ago to help fund girls attending CSW that year. We applaud their creativity! They are making good use of social media

Grail Formation Program for Formators in Latin America *Ticha Vasconcelos* Portugal

By request of the International Leadership Team (ILT) and the International Formation Team, a Program for Formation for Formators in Latin America was held in Ecuador from February 18th to the 26th, 2017, at *Casa de Spiritualidad de las hermanas Mercedianas*, a few kilometers from Quito, in the town of Cumbaya. Countries present were: Ecuador, Brazil, Mexico, Paraguay, Honduras, the US, Angola [1] and Portugal[2] .

(Photo participants)

The basic content was the one used in previous Formation Programs in South Africa and Portugal but it was analyzed and reviewed on a regular basis, according to a daily evaluation and suggestions by participants.

A detailed report is almost finished describing the Program, using a timeline approach, by following each day's activities and describing as objectively as possible the development of each day.

The members of the team leading the meeting were Rosaurora Espinosa (Mexico), Silvani Valentim (Brazil) and Ticha Vasconcelos (Portugal). Marian Schwab, due to health reasons, was unable to attend as the ILT representative.

As an emergent Grail country, there are no words to describe Ecuador's organizing skills, sense of hospitality, joy, care with each participant, and organizing skills. The *Exploradoras del Grial* in Ecuador together with *Honduras* and *Paraguay* are a big hope for the growing of the Grail in Central and South America. A lot of interchange with the experience of "older" Grail countries - Brasil, Mexico and, of course, the United States as a Northern American country. They constituted a very important asset in the Program.

Every country prepared a presentation about itself and how the Grail is developing there. Exploration of the basic documents of the International Grail were used: *Faith Message*, *Declaration of Vision* and *Declaration of*

[1] Portuguese speaking country that couldn't be present in South Africa Program.

[2] Portugal was "represented" by Ticha Vasconcelos one of the facilitators, who has been supporting the emerging Grail in Angola and Laura Marques, as a translator from Portuguese Spanish and vice-versa.

Mission, as well as *Common Elements of Formation* as was done in the other two formation programs held in South Africa and Portugal. Two other inspiring papers were used: Rachel Donders' S*ources of Our Grail Dynamism* and Anne Hope's text about *The Grail Cup.* We worked in small groups so that we could reach the depth we wanted participants to have in the understanding of these documents.

To be invited to be leaders was a privilege but also a challenge in working with a new group of women. Because of our long experience we were able to be creative; using different tools and methodologies. On the other hand, the gathering was very much enhanced by the maturity of the participants, all coming from different experiences of training and deep commitment with organizations in their countries. Being very clear about our desire to have a deep, deep participation, they gave us daily feedback in order to plan in a better way each day yet to come.

Participants were led to understand who Father van Ginneken was and viewed the video *Inspired Lives.* One of the participants commented: "We realized ***what a revolutionary act it was to build the Grail 100 years ago."***

Other participants' comments: "The Spirit was working. We had not coordinated, yet the theme of us and Grail as seeds kept coming up, woven throughout the days. We are a connection, circling the pain of humanity. We carry the seed of our Grail ancestors into the present and the future," "The planet doesn´t need us, we need the planet." "We are a movement of Grace. We are reaffirmed as women, who can make the path. We germinate life."

On our free day in the morning we headed to the Casa del Alabado, a museum that is directed by Ecuador Grail explorer, Maria Fernanda. Casa del Alabado is a museum of pre-colombian art. We got a very informative tour of the museum and learned about the history and spirituality of the indigenous of South America. After our tour of the museum, we had about one hour to walk around the Historical Center of Quito. After lunch the group headed to a meeting at *Asylum Access*, an international organization that works with refugees. We heard testimonies of Colombian and Venezuelan refugee women who have formed a group called *Network of Women without Borders*. The stories that they told us of discrimination were very hard to hear but gave Grail members a good understanding about the situation and what kind of work could be done around this issue.

In the second part of the Formation Program participants worked specifically on the different dimensions of formation in each country and how they were interpreted in their process of formation. Participants had a discussion around methodologies used in their countries for formation and its strategies and challenges.

Finally, participants came up with a document calle*d* ***Vision for Formation in the Americas*** and a *proposal to the IGA to deepen regional formation work in Latin America.* These documents were presented to the ILT.

There was also a suggestion to create a ***regional*** Grail website that could include the report from this meeting, the documents from International Grail in Spanish and Portuguese, and many of the methodologies, which will continue to evolve.

The opening and closing celebrations and every morning prayer or meditationss was considered very meaningful by participants. They were powerful moments and all the creativity and deep spirituality of the participants were there. We would say that, together with the going deep into Grail declarations of Vision, Mission and Spirituality, they were the ***essence*** of the Program. There was also a simple Communion Service led by two participants who were ministers. Ticha shared with participants, in a very personal way, her vision of the Nucleus. Her

presentation, from a feminist perspective, about Teresa of Ávila, a Spanish Saint, based on the meaning of a theology of experience, brought enthusiasm to participants.

The Ecuador Team prepared the Initial and the Final Celebrations bringing to the participants a taste of their culture and spirituality, the role of symbols (flowers, seeds and stones) and also drumming and dancing, together with guided meditative moments. At the center the Grail cup "radiated" through colored strings into small figurines of different women from pre-Colombian tradition which were given to each one of the participants by the Grail in Ecuador, a treasure to bring home.

Finally there was a *Circle of appreciation* where each of the facilitators spoke. Participants affirmed the flexibility of the organizing team and the very practical and creative ways to present the results of the working groups. Participants also formulated a deep appreciation for Ecuador's hospitality with special emphasis and recognition of the work of Monica Maher (originally from the Grail in Boston, USA), who has been crucial in helping the development of the Grail in Central and South America.

We feel happy that we were part of that. *Rosaurora, Silvani and Ticha*

Environmental Protection *Catherine Nansubuga* Uganda

Poem written by Catherine Nansubuga, 14 years old from Uganda, part of the Grail delegation CSW61, the year 2017

Environmental protection
What do we have to do?
To protect our environment,
To make the air fresh
To make the birds fly
Again, in the gas tree, blue sky.

Do not cut a tree,
Instead, save a tree
For another treat,
The fruits to eat,
The timber we use
And the shade we need

Recycle and re use!
Do not throw polythene bags,
For when they touch the soil'
It cannot breathe.
Pick up the litter,
Give the soil life
To give a new life,
A seedling
You will see.

For new generation to be healthy,

To grow up in world,
So beautiful and green
Where rainbows will fall,
Flowers will bloom,
Rain will fall,
The sun will shine
And famine will end.

Let's come together
To protect the environment,
To make the world better,
Bigger, Fresher
And more amazing
Let's promote the environment,
Our mother Earth
Our sacred place.

The Grail and Creative Arts *Gerda Kaufmann* Germany

Theme: "How have the creative arts (music, visual, dance, written) been used as Grail in your country to transform and enhance the spirit or in any other way made a connection to the Grail mission? "

In the Advent and Pentecost season we offer a common celebration in the Grail center in Mülheim and we invite a lot of interested women. About 15 women meet on Friday afternoons at 3 o'clock pm. for about three hours or more. After we have a welcome introduction with tea, coffee and some cake there is a spiritual phase planned. Afterwards we have a snack and with the lively exchange of views, the evening can become long.

Helma Schaumburg-Lowitz, a longstanding friend of the Grail in Germany, is also a member of the preparation team. She lives in the neighbouring city, Duisburg, and in 1994 she founded a little dance workshop for women. For special occasions she offers liturgical dances in her own and other Catholic communities. She offers this to the Grail as well.

Helma writes:

"The participants expect movement with music every time we meet. We always find music from *women* as the basis for the dances. We do these dances with or without other components, for example, ribbons or cloths.

To me, it lies in my heart, to create opportunities to hear compositions of music by women, which is hushed up in the concert halls. At all times and in every country there were female composers, who have written instrumental and vocal music: symphonies, suites, opera, sacred music, church-music, soundtracks.

I also find useful, instrumental pieces of the contemporary time, which can be introduced in different opportunities, meetings, and celebrations."

Helma also creates the choreography, which fits to the music, in her own dance-factory. Creative women from other regional groups in Germany are involved with meditative dances and puppet shows in the national meetings of the Grail in Germany, which take place 3 times a year.

Spirituality and Sacred Dance *Chris de Leeuw* the Netherlands

The other day I followed an evening about Multiple Religious Belonging – a research project of Professor Manuela Kalsky and her colleague professor André van der Braak of the Vrije Universiteit of Amsterdam. To Mix and Match is the new lifestyle! Not only in religion but also in clothing, house style and the like. Many people are searching for meaning of their lives, they are not less religious than before, but they experience religion in a different way, more individualistic, more from their own experience, more flexible, more mixed.

Apart from a small group of people who are a long-time member of one particular Church, they distinguish three other groups:

- people who feel themselves belonging to two different religious beliefs e.g. Christianity and Buddhism, (so called dual belongers)
- people who feel one religious belief as their basic belief but also co-opt elements of other religions into their lives (I think we, in our ecumenical Dominicus church, do so) and
- people who have no affiliation to any religion but who fill their religious sense with elements taken from different religious and worldview traditions.

They published a journal with the results of their research and with interviews of multi-religious people. Unfortunately it is in Dutch (www.glossy-mix.nl) In my own life I recognise this too. On Sunday I feel inspired by the reflection (that word fits better than *'sermon')*, the songs chosen at the theme of the service, and the togetherness in our Dominicus church. And apart from this Reiki-giving, mantra singing and sacred dance are also spiritual sources for me.
Bernard Wosien, founder of sacred dance as we dance it, wrote:
"Dancing is meditation in movement,
entering into silence
where every movement
becomes a prayer."

In our church, we dance during autumn and spring every two weeks on Wednesday mornings. I like it very much! Sometimes it is just the joy of dancing, sometimes I experience more than that, (difficult to put into words for they fall short): an inner knowing of belonging to, being incorporated into all creation, in God - whoever God may be. Some years ago during our meeting in America of Grailfolks between the ages of 70 and 100 years, we danced with a small group. I think a few times some of us experienced this rise beyond our own selves. This picture is from these days. We also had the opportunity to experience the sacred dance at the international Grail Retreat in Sobrado in 2016.

This prayer of Bernard I sometimes pray:

You who set the world in motion
now set me in motion too,
you take me from the depth
and lift me up to your height.

I dance a song of silence
on music of the cosmos
and put my foot on the edge of heaven
and feel how your smile
makes me happy.

"How creative arts intrinsically strengthen the Grail in Mozambique and contribute for "the transformation of everything touched by it…"

Ida Alvarinho Gonçalves Mozambique

We will never have enough words to praise the Author of the most sublime art piece, which is itself confused with the gallery where it's permanently displayed: "The Creation"! Colors, sounds, shapes, flavors, movements, harmony, delicacy, strength, soul, communication, sharing, diversity, spiritual elevation, everything is there! We live in an art piece and we are part of the same clay that made it. How can we, then, express ourselves without using this essence of ours, art? If ¨one image is worth a thousand words¨, one single word can characterize an image, a melody can elevate the spirit. A dance can fuse the body and the soul and spread beauty, strength and joy. A color can speak of who we are and gives life, a set of colors can summarize both our harmony and our aggressiveness...

In the Grail in Mozambique, our moments and actions always involve symbolic expressions in their various forms: dancing, singing, composition of images through drawing or using other forms like our ¨capulanas,¨ dramatization, written texts etc. And this form of expression of course helps us ¨embody¨ the Grail's mission and helps us ¨touch the world¨ and *¨change what we touch¨!*

At the entrance of our Center, there is a huge Grail made of capulana fabric displayed on the wall. The same thing happens on the floor of the meeting room; where we have a capulana in the shape of a cup. Even without words, any person can understand that here there's a symbol ¨a mark¨ - the grail – and is also fascinated that the capulana is being used to artistically contribute on another level. This way we are also expressing a symbol of our national culture.

In the documents we write (reports, invitations, flyers, brochures, messages, etc.) we always have an illustration that brings it to life; we make an effort to draw them ourselves as a way of saying we are opening our material and spiritual home to others and passing a more personalized message of our group.

In our moments of prayer, music, singing and dancing are always present. We need these elements in order to engage into our intimate conversations with one another and with the Great Author of this common art piece that we belong to. We also use other symbols that help us internalize this. The composition of capulanas in the image on the side for example, is about the prayer of ¨meditation and contemplation¨ and the ¨prayer of worship, praise, and joy.¨

The writing either in prose or poetry (or a mix of it!) has also been present, particularly in moments of specific celebrations. We use this form of art to express ¨more directly¨ our message, which is usually presented following a given ritual. The "Tertúlias de Sábado" (Saturday's Chatting) activity that we have at our center is directly connected to the development of the appreciation for ¨literature¨ and other forms of art (recitations of poems, music moments, etc.) because we believe that art is a vehicle of human elevation and we want to stimulate it particularly in our youth.

We have been cultivating our artistic expression to enrich us and for us to touch the world with greater delicacy, joy and depth. Most of the time, the individual production of writing, composition of materials, illustrations, drawings, singing, dancing, etc., has been interlacing with the Grail - national and international – making it hard to distinguish one from the other. Some of us are authors of articles and illustrations included in books published by other Grail groups or authors who refer to the Grail. We have also been reading and using works published by other Grail groups or individual participants of the groups. All the initiatives enrich us, fortify our spiritual dimension, bring more harmony, help cultivate in us and others the concepts of beauty, joy, the richness of diversity in cultural expressions, the connection and respect for the planet! And that's how we want to continue our journey and our search!

What is the **Grail Center?**

A place where we dream…
We build…
A place where we want to risk the impossible
A place in which we desire it to be:
An invite to debate and exchange ideas,
A challenge to creativity,
An opening to others and to the world,
A continuous spiritual search,
A space of formation and growth,
A collective search of alternatives,
A new way of thinking and acting.
A place where the world and others
Are the event and challenge
Are priority and commitment.

In "Friday's Conversations" – Grail-Mozambique, 2011

Portuguese Version

"Como as artes criativas fortalecem intrinsecamente o Graal de Moçambique e contribuem a que "*ela transforme tudo em que toca…..*"

Ida Alvarinho Gonçalves

Nunca teremos palavras suficientes para exaltarmos o Autor da mais sublime obra de arte que se confunde, ela própria, com a galeria em que está exposta, permanentemente: "A Criação"! Cores, sons, formas, sabores, movimentos, harmonia, delicadeza, força, alma, comunicação, partilha, diversidade, elevação espiritual, tudo está lá! Vivemos numa obra de arte e somos parte do mesmo barro que a compõe. Como podemos, então, expressarmo-nos sem ser através dessa nossa essência, a arte? Se "uma imagem vale por mil palavras", uma única palavra pode caracterizar uma imagem, uma melodia eleva o espírito, uma dança congrega corpo e alma e distribui beleza, força e alegria, uma cor diz de nós e dá vida, um conjunto de cores resume quer a nossa harmonia, quer as nossas agressividades…

No Graal em Moçambique, os nossos momentos e as nossas acções estão sempre envolvidos de expressões simbólicas, nas suas mais variadas formas: dança, canto, composição de imagens quer através do desenho quer usando outros meios, como por exemplo as nossas "capulanas", dramatização, texto escrito, etc. E esta forma de expressão, claro, ajuda-nos a "encarnar" a missão do Graal e ajuda-nos a "tocar o mundo" e " *a mudar aquilo em que tocamos*"!....

No nosso Centro, encontra-se logo à entrada, exposto na parede, um grande cálice feito em capulana; o mesmo acontece no chão da sala dos encontros; mesmo sem palavras, qualquer pessoa percebe que há aqui um símbolo "de marca" - o cálice - e fica também encantada e envolvida pela capulana usada a contribuir artisticamente a um outro nível. Fica logo também expresso um símbolo da nossa cultura nacional.

Nos documentos que escrevemos (relatório, convites, folhetos, brochuras, mensagens, etc.) colocamos sempre uma alma ao mesmo; fazemos esforços para que sejam elaborados por nós mesmas, como forma de nos abrirmos a nossa casa material e espiritual aos outros e mensagem mais personalizada do nosso grupo.

ilustração que dê desenhos dizermos, passarmos uma

Nos momentos de oração, a música, o canto e a dança estão sempre presentes. Precisamos destes condimentos para colocarmos em conversa os nossos íntimos, umas com as outras e com o Grande Autor da obra comum de que fazemos parte. Usamos também outros símbolos que nos ajudem a interiorizar. A composição de capulanas na imagem ao lado, fala, por exemplo, da oração de "meditação e recolhimento" e da "oração de louvor, de aclamação, de alegria".

A escrita, quer em prosa, quer em poesia (ou uma mistura!), também tem estado presente, particularmente nos momentos de celebrações específicas, usando assim esta forma de arte para transmitirmos "mais directamente" a nossa mensagem, que é muitas vezes apresentada seguindo um dado ritual. A actividade "Tertúlias", que realizamos no nosso centro, está directamente ligada à criação do gosto pela "literatura" e por outras formas de arte (declamação de poemas, momentos musicais, etc.) pois achamos que é um veículo de elevação humana, que queremos estimular particularmente no seio dos jovens.

Só uma palavras...

O Graal-Moçambique iniciou, no ano de 2000, as "Tertúlias de Sábado". Naquela altura, estávamos a ser percursoras neste tipo de actividade; não conhecíamos em Maputo, outro "espaço" em que se juntavam jovens e adultos a falar sobre um livro, a dizer /ouvir poesia, a tocar e a cantar...

In "Tertúlias"- Graal Moçambique, 2011

Temos cultivado a nossa expressão artística, para nos enriquecermos e para tocarmos com maior delicadeza, alegria e profundidade, o mundo. A produção individual de escrita, composição de materiais, ilustrações, desenho, canto, dança, etc., tem-se entrelaçado, na maior parte das vezes, com o Graal – nacional e internacional - sendo difícil estabelecer a fronteira entre um campo e o outro. Algumas de nós são autoras de textos ou ilustrações incluídos em livros publicados por outros grupos do Graal ou por autores que referem o Graal. Também que temos lido e usado obras publicadas ou por Grupos do Graal ou por participantes individuais dos mesmos. Todas as iniciativas nos enriquecem, fortalecem a dimensão espiritual, trazem mais harmonia, ajudam a cultivar em nós e nos outros a noção do belo, a alegria, a riqueza da diversidade de expressões culturais, a conexão e respeito pelo planeta! E assim queremos continuar a percorrer o nosso caminho e a nossa procura!...

O que é o **Centro do Graal?**

Um lugar que sonhámos...
que construímos...
O lugar onde queremos arriscar o (im)possível
O lugar que desejamos que seja:
um convite ao debate e troca de ideias,
um desafio à criatividade,
uma abertura aos outros e ao mundo,
uma procura espiritual contínua,
um espaço de formação e crescimento,
uma busca colectiva de alternativas,
uma nova maneira de pensar e agir.
O lugar onde o mundo e os outros
são o acontecimento e o desafio
são a prioridade e o empenhamento.

In "Conversas de Sexta" – Graal-Moçambique, 2011

Becoming an artist with the Grail *Marijke de Koning* Portugal

The question is huge: "How have the creative arts (music, visual, dance, written) been used as Grail in your country to transform and enhance the spirit or in any other way made a connection to the Grail mission?" Interesting stories could be told by the many "authors" of the 60 years of Grail history in Portugal. Like the one that happened in the first decade as described in *Histories of the Grail*:

> The Centre of Art and Culture in Coimbra (which existed between 1963 and 1969) was a highpoint of our cultural expression. It was a place not only for cultural debates and seminars but also for displaying current books and religious art (p. 54).

I will just travel back to three moments of "art work" in which I participated myself as an educational worker and stop there briefly to describe in a few lines what "happened." But first I will share with you some ideas that for me are the base of the underlying philosophy of an "art pedagogy" that tries to connect women and girls to the Grail vision and mission.

I. Art pedagogy: some aspects of the underlying philosophy

I.1. "Artistry" is a concept developed in the context of the Sciences of Education by Donald Schön (1983), who proposes "to challenge professionals to rethink the technical knowledge's role in the light of the artistic concept," Twenty years later, Elliot W. Eisner (2003) argues in his article "Artistry in Education" that the "primary mission of education is to prepare artists. The concept of art used here is not limited to visual arts, but is also used for everything that is done with quality."

I.2. Art is not only related to objects. Our lives can be transformed in works of art, as the French philosopher Michel Foucault (1995) stated. The German artist Joseph Beuys referred to "the process of living as a creative art," For him "each human being is an artist" (1973). In the documentary *Paula Rego, Secrets & Stories* (2017) Nick Willing makes a portrait of his mother, the famous Portuguese painter Paula Rego who lived a great part of her life in London. "My film is not about the artist, it's about the person," he says. "What happened is that she was always first an artist, then a person and on the third place a mother. I wanted to discover the person behind the painter."
For most of us it is exactly the other way round: to discover something of an artist behind, or in the person we are trying to become. Part of the Grail mission consists in providing educational contexts in which it is possible to experience that it is in relating to others that we "create ourselves," that we can become artists shaping our lives, because, as noted by Maria de Lourdes Pintasilgo (2011), "[T]he isolated individual is an abstraction".

I.3. We need to be seen by others in the public space. For the Portuguese artist Jose Almada Negreiros (1893-1970), "[A]ll art, in its various forms, would be a part of the 'spectacle' that the artist would have to present before the public." Not only the artists who create objects of art, but all of us need the podium of the public space for our performances of speech and action or other creative expressions, in order to have our "second births" (Hannah Arendt) as creators of our lives. In this process we need to be able to balance the need to be seen and valued by others with the "capability" to accept not to be seen. What are capabilities?

> They are answers to the question, "What is this person able to do and be?' . . . . Capability is thus a kind of freedom: the substantive freedom to achieve alternative functioning combinations." In other words: they are not just abilities residing inside a person but also freedoms and opportunities created by a combination of personal abilities and the political, social and economic environment." (Martha Nussbaum, 2011)

You could say that we have to learn to live with the tension between "being of this world and not being of this world," as we refer to in the Grail. Living the tension between "being on the stage and not being on the stage" asks for self confidence and humility. This is a lifelong learning process and the Grail can provide an appropriate learning context for the development of capabilities, combining the personal and the community dimensions.

I.4. Artistic creation of the self into being means *becoming other*, the other of the self. It does not mean losing yourself in being a "star" on a podium. The Dutch writer Connie Palmen (2017), while analyzing the lives of four women artists, makes a distinction between the "star" and the artist: the star is a creation of the person herself, functioning in the public space and manipulating her own image in order to be seen and recognized while being an artist implies work that needs talent. In Grail non-formal educational projects it may be important to introduce the concept *Citizenship art*, a form of community art we developed in our *ECO* project (see below). In *citizenship art* the resulting artwork is less important as a product, but is primarily relevant as a process of interaction amongst all people involved. The "artistic work" is in *citizenship art* the process of thinking and acting according to the quality of individual and collective life, inspired by an aesthetic sensibility and a desire to include the other and the different in our affections.

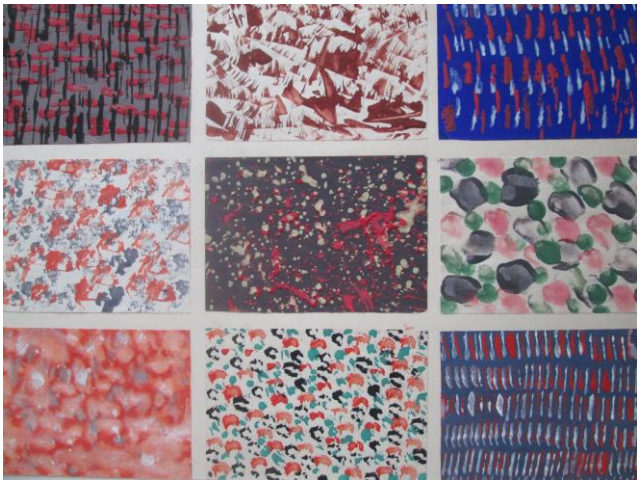
II. Three moments of "art work"

What do the following three projects have in common in terms of "art work"? They create a disruption, a discontinuity in the daily life experience through "events" of artistic expression and creativity. Through a relational process of collective exchanges among participants, multiple meanings are built. Through artistic expression the seemingly trivial day-to-day event is transformed into something extra-ordinary. Girls and women are emerging as subjects of their lives, while rebuilding creatively the meaning of who they are, who they want to become and how they would like to shape their lives.

II.1. Lisbon 1971 – 1973: Work with a group of high school students, between 15 and 17 years old, still in the time of the dictatorial regime. Central theme: "the person I meet is no longer a stranger." During the process we used group reflections on diverse themes, creative expression, like drawing, painting, music, corporal expression and movement. We also used the form of Newspaper Theater with the aim to address socio-political questions. In order to enter in contact with the "real life" of the people in the country we organized work camps, one in a village, Almalaguês, where the Grail was doing literacy work with Paulo Freire's conscientization methodology.

II.2. North of Portugal 1979 -1983: Pre-school Child Centers in 10 villages. During the international year of the child (1979) and in the context of socio-cultural projects with women in rural areas, emerged the initiative of

creating alternative pre-school educational centers for young children (3-6 years). Young women were selected and educated as animators and received an intensive training during 2 years in which artistic expression was one of the main ingredients. Toys were made of waste materials. At the end of the project an exposition of "art works" of animators and children was presented at a teacher's training school in Oporto.



II.3. Golegã 2014-2015: *ECO* (Encounter with the Other) Project. This Project consisted in an educational process with youngsters (girls and boys) and adults, in partnership with several local institutions. The "art work" happened in a weekly afternoon training with youngsters, based on a polymorphic model of the arts. Various artistic languages were used. Through a process of experiential learning through the body, we tried to develop a performative approach of social realities, in which each person, in relation with others, learns to re-create him or herself continuously as the "other of the self". One of the central concepts of this project was *Citizenship Art*:

> Citizenship art is a form of community art.
> Citizenship art is an art of communication, in the ECO Project permeated by the Encounter with the Other and Inclusive Affection. In citizenship art it is impossible not
> to create community. Expressions of citizenship art move on a continuum between two poles: between communication as art and art as communication.

You can watch a video of the *ECO* Project here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c1VjFLjmhxc

and read about the Project in English or Portuguese opening the following links:

http://www.graal.org.pt//files/Echoing.pdf
http://www.graal.org.pt//files/ECO_pub_adults_english_Final.pdf

http://www.graal.org.pt//files/Ecoando_com%20e%20para%20Jovens.pdf
http://www.graal.org.pt//files/digital_final_Trajetos%20de%20Educ%20Jovens%20e%20Adultos.pdf

My Experience of Grail and the Arts *Carol Siemering USA*

I was so privileged, beginning at eighteen, to be part of the Year School from 1961-1964. All of it was remarkable and challenging and life-giving but I want to share how I experienced the transformative power of the arts there. We danced. We sang, we wrote, we did visual art. It was integrated into the very fabric of our lives. It was the chant and Father Gelineau's and Lynn's pieces during the liturgy and Elaine Jones' gospel singing at our "high holy Sunday breakfasts." It was paintings and wall hangings and sculptures. It was crèches from all over the world at Christmastime and flowers gathered from our land being hung on the posts in the Oratory during the Gloria at the Easter Vigil. It was an "incarnation": the Holy manifested in the concrete. It was everywhere and every day. I am forever grateful for that experience.

Since I left Grailville, the arts have continued to be an integral part of my life. I have sung, painted, danced and written. It is still a way I touch the Holy and am touched by the Holy. It is also how I make myself heard. I would like to share one poem written recently about the Woman's March in Boston which took place after the inauguration of Donald Trump.

Women's March Boston January 21, 2017

Standing on the crowded subway
I see a woman look up. *I know you*, she says
Maggie Blanchard! I cry.
Fourteen years since,
we talk of the old times at "the Welfare",
Of the recent funerals of those we worked with.
We are somehow there and here
at the same time.
Two women in their seventies
who went to jail for demonstrating in the sixties.
Now here and there.

Coming out of Park Street Station,
my daughter has lost her glove
It is a fancy and expensive glove—
warm with a fur cuff. She is slightly bereft.
We double back. It is nowhere.

We join the wave upon wave of those who have gathered—
side by side, knitted pink hats, a bobbing of brilliant
and witty signs. Songs, speeches.
The Common, entirely covered with people—
one hundred seventy-five thousand strong.

We have been standing for hours. We are tired.
We decide to leave after the rally
and skip the march part.
As we are leaving, two very small girls

impossibly dressed in the exact
same princess costume
come upon one another.
Let's dance! says the one.
And they do.

As we near the station's entry
I join my hands flat together
Please Saint Anthony, let me find that glove.
And then, surrounded by a large swath of grass,
it appears, that sister glove,
untrodden, pristine, waiting…
and all and anything
seems wonderful and possible.

The Grail and the Renewal of the Liturgy *Marian Ronan* USA

There Were Also Many Women There: *Lay Women in the Liturgical Movement in the United States, 1926-1959* by Katherine E. Harmon (Liturgical Press, 2012). 412 pp. Paperback: $39.95 eBook, $31.99.

As Grail women know very well, women around the world do not get the recognition they deserve, and this has been true throughout history.

One history from which women have been significantly excluded is that of the renewal of the liturgy that took place in the Roman Catholic Church in the 19th and 20th centuries. In *There Were Also Many Women There*, historian Katharine Harmon examines the influential but largely neglected role that laywomen, played in the Roman Catholic Liturgical Movement in the United States. To do so, she first explores the European origins of the Liturgical Movement, and then focuses on the Liturgical Movement in the U.S. The Grail plays an important part in both sections of the book.

So what is the Liturgical Movement, and why is it important? Begun in the 1830s, the Liturgical Movement was an effort to reform the worship practices of the Roman Catholic Church. Some people dismiss it as nothing more than an attempt to return to the romanticism of the middle Ages. Harmon, however, shows that the movement was a profoundly social development.

This is so because at the time when the Liturgical Movement started, the liturgy was often an isolating experience, with the priest saying Mass in Latin with his back to the people, and the people engaged in individual devotional activities. Instead, the Liturgical Movement encouraged everyone to offer responses to the priest's words and sing together during the Mass. In effect, the goal of the movement was to make the liturgy a socially

unifying experience, bringing the liturgical participant "into union with the Christian community and, thus inspired, to expand this spirit outward for the renewal of society."(11)

Launched in Benedictine monasteries in France, the liturgical movement took on new energy after the catastrophic effects of World War I. Active, intelligent liturgical participation in the oneness of Christ's body would enable God's grace to permeate and redeem the world. Not coincidentally, the Society of the Women of Nazareth, the group that became the Grail, was itself founded in 1921, to convert the world from the callous and demoralizing values that the war had made visible.

Harmon acknowledges that the Women of Nazareth and the Grail Youth Movement they launched in 1928 were not explicitly part of the European liturgical movement. But she argues that the massive colorful religious performances that the Grail staged with thousands of Dutch girls in stadiums beginning in 1932 was "one of the most courageous and public realizations of Catholic Action (the lay Catholic turn to social justice) in the years between the world wars." She also quotes an early article about the Grail in a publication of the US Liturgical Movement stating that the Grail movement was paradigmatic of the essential relationship between liturgy and lived Christianity: The Grail seemed "to be enlivened with a living appreciation of liturgical life and an active understanding of the real meaning of the lay apostolate." (45).

After the Grail's arrival in the U.S. in 1940, the liturgical dimension of the movement became even more explicit. U.S. co-founders Lydwine van Kersbergen and Joan Overboss attended and spoke out at national liturgical meetings, and nationally recognized leaders of the Liturgical Movement led courses and celebrated the Eucharist at Grail centers. And in the U.S., as much as or more than was the case in Europe, the Grail celebration of the liturgy, including the singing of Gregorian chant, the creation of other chant-based liturgical music, and liturgical dance, was inextricably connected to the Grail's commitment to Catholic Action—social justice—and living an integrated life on the land.

Lydwine van Kersbergen stressed that "the first principle in the training of lay apostles is the understanding that the experience of the sacred liturgy is the integrating center of life" (224). The great U.S. Catholic social justice activist Dorothy Day made retreats with the Grail outside Chicago and at Grailville and commented enthusiastically on the unity between prayer, singing and action in the Grail. And as Harmon demonstrates, thousands of other U.S. women took their Grail liturgical training back with them to parishes and lay groups across the country.

So why does this matter? Because the liturgy, and especially liturgical singing, were fundamental to the formation of the generations of Grail women who helped change the Catholic Church and the wider society in which that church played an influential role. And many of these women went on from that formation to engage

in amazingly hard, brave, and even heroic work to establish what they understood to be God's kingdom on earth. I am thinking here of the Dutch Grail women who continued to hold underground meetings during the Nazi occupation of Holland, although they knew they would be sent to concentration camps if they were caught. And others who stayed at their mission stations in Africa and Latin America in the face of horrifying violence—in one case, remaining in central Africa even after a Grail member was murdered in her bed in the next room during a civil war. And then there were the women who worked their entire lives to build the Grail and serve God's people in their own countries in Africa, Latin America and the Pacific.

The Grail is currently active in eighteen countries around the world. Over its near century of existence, it has supported, enlivened and educated thousands of women and girls, running schools and hospitals, leading pioneering programs in progressive education, liberation theology, social transformation, and agriculture. And for many years the Roman Catholic liturgy was at the heart of such action for social change. What forms of worship and celebration will impassion us to act together in response to the grave challenges facing the world today?

Women of Vision Book Review *Deidre Cornell* USA

Women of Vision: Sixteen Founders of the International Grail Movement by Marian Ronan and Mary O'Brien.

Berkeley, CA: Apocryphile Press, 2017 Deidre ***Cornell USA***

This book will prove extremely valuable to the International Grail.

Eva Fleischner and Nancy Hennessy Cooney had originally suggested a biography of Lydwine van Kersbergen. As stated in the opening pages, "When Lydwine, in classic Grail fashion, declined to be the sole focus of the volume, it evolved into the book before you…." This remarkable volume compiles the stories of 16 Grail women who, as the title states, *founded* the Grail on six continents between 1921 and 2001.

Mary O'Brien heroically conducted interviews and drafted 15 of the 16 chapters, writing her Introduction in 2003. The project lay dormant until a couple of years ago, when the International Grail Archives and History Committee asked Marian Ronan to finish the book. Marian wrote up the remaining story, completed the editing and updating process, and found a publisher for the work. Chapter 1, on Lydwine, is reprinted with permission from a 1997 edition of *U.S. Catholic Historian*, written by Mary O'Brien and Patricia Miller. Twenty years later, the collection has finally arrived. I read it just in time for Pentecost.

Grail readers will be familiar with the origins of the Grail as the Women of Nazareth (1921), one of three strands of lay groups started by Jesuit Fr. Jacques van Ginneken. Names of many of the founders portrayed so sensitively in this book will "ring a bell." However, the depth and breadth achieved by the editors are, frankly, astounding. Not only did I deepen knowledge of the Grail's historical context; I often had to put the book down because my heart and eyes were too full to continue. The editors hold the stories lovingly, guiding content and setting context for every chapter for readers' benefit. Each chapter offers insight into the personal trajectory of each Grail woman, with helpful notations and indispensable introductions….and each testimony invites an intimate visit with these women's very souls. The same Grail spirit blazes in each flame.

The book is crafted in four sections: The Old Wise Woman, which presents four early Dutch Grail pioneers; "Sent Forth Into the World," which tells of how the Grail spread to several countries, even amid internal and external challenges; "The Vision Burned," which compellingly portrays the particularly "Grail" intersection of action and contemplation; and "A Vision of a Justice-Filled World," devoted to three founders of the Grail in Africa. The framework is chronological, which helps unite this set of diverse stories which span continents and decades.

Almost a century later, it is difficult for me to imagine the Grail beginnings. The courage of the founders during the Nazi Regime is breathtaking. Hilda Canters recalled, "If the Germans saw three of us together we'd be sent to a concentration camp…."p. 71. Somehow Dutch Grail members managed to hold clandestine meetings, organize two secret retreats with Fr. van Ginneken, and even hide Jews in the contagious ward of a hospital.

Another episode which resounds somberly through these pages is the 1963 murder of French Grail member Sis de Klerk. Her death reminds readers of the very real risks that Grail women undertook. Ton Brouwer expresses regret that Sis' violent death was never solved. Courage shines in the testimonies of Bep Camanada, Mary Louise Tully, Magdalene Oberhoffer and others who set out overseas. And as a Grail member I felt proud to belong to the same movement as Rachel Donders, Maria de Lourdes Pintasilgo, Teresa Santa Clara Gomes, Elizabeth Estencia Namaganda, Imelda Alfred Gaurwa and others who carried/carry such responsibility in their country, in the Grail and in the Church. The founders truly are "trailblazers" opening the way for other women.

Each testimony shows these founders as forward-thinking, becoming aware of key themes "before their times." We hear the shift from colonialism and traditionally paternalistic approaches to national Grail identities and autonomy. We witness a "cosmic" experience of the natural world during Holy Week in Japan through the eyes of Rachel Donders. p. 36. With Eileen Schaeffler, we discover the importance of opening the Grail to the United Nations. Maria de Lourdes Pintasilgo's reflection on women, power and international solidarity remains convincing and contemporary. Many of the chapters include thoughtful reflections on the role of women in Christianity, and of Catholic women in relation to the hierarchy; like Lydwine's, some of the views expressed are quite candid (and surprising!) *Women of Vision* offers a transparent window into their thinking. The sharings are presented gently enough to be inviting and engaging, placed in the setting of their own spiritual evolution.

The intimacy of hearing firsthand about formative experiences especially touched me. I was captivated by the childhood and early adult stories, of parents who "gave up" their daughters to the Grail – even if they were not quite sure what it was about. Honorata Lubero Francis Mvungi relates, "I told my parents, 'I am joining the Grail.' My mother asked what the Grail was about and I told her I would know when I got there." P. 333. Mary Louise Tully speaks of her parents' support: "I left them but they never left me." p. 97 a poignant note from Ton Brouwer's parents when she left for the Tiltenberg is included. On the other hand, Elizabeth Namaganda noted wryly, "My mother…realized she was fighting a losing battle; she gave up" p. 285; and Imelda Alfred Gaurwa's parents opposed her Grail commitment.

I loved the descriptions of the Tiltenberg and Grailville as international formation centers for young women from all over the world. Cultivating a particularly Grail culture (as Rachel Donders put it), Teresa Santa Clara Gomes remembers how even the flowers were chosen according to the liturgical season. Elizabeth Estencia Namaganda, Rebecca Nebrida and others make Grailville come alive for those of us who never had the opportunity to experience it.

At the other end of the spectrum, the interviews reflect the fruit of age: wisdom. Readers benefit from hearing these voices which, without pretention or artifice, speak of the Holy Spirit making all things new.

The goal of inculturation of the Grail in different countries was present from early on, as evidenced by too many stories to cite individually, but I was glad to learn more about Grail beginnings in the Philippines, South Africa and Australia, for example. I especially enjoyed learning details of the founding of Kisekibaha in Tanzania. It is a fascinating story, told most directly through chapters on Imelda Gaurwa and Honorata Lubero Francis Mvungi, which illustrates the process of the Grail taking root there. *Women of Vision* will be helpful for us in understanding local Grail groups in their national and cultural contexts.

Which leads to my first observation. Namely, that contemporary tensions or contradictions in the Grail have a long history – dating back to its first decade! During the first years -- with the tumult of the war, changing expectations of the Grail on the part of church hierarchy, and a time of severed communication -- Grail members themselves asked, is the Grail best understood as a women's movement, a lay movement, or a youth movement? Then, would it be free to expand in oversees mission projects, or tied to the needs of the local bishop? As the Grail moved into various countries, more questions arose. How closely would it follow Catholic structures? Were hierarchical organization, an emphasis on monastic spirituality, or an option for celibacy inherent to Grail life? What was the place of the "fiery core," the nucleus, to which so many of these founders belonged/belong? As the Grail vision in each country became inculturated, Grail communities grappled with these questions.

At times, the chapters reveal how difficult it must have been for Grail founders to put the Grail vision into practice. They speak of times when projects came together, and when things fell apart…when structures "worked" or had to be changed…when the commitment they had made led to assignments for which they did not feel prepared. This sentence pierced me: speaking of a devastating time, Hilda Canters says, "So we had to leave." Hilda Canters, p. 75. Ton Brouwer, says of leaving the Belgian Congo, where her life was endangered, "We cried as we left." P. 160 Bep Caminada recalls being fired from two jobs, followed by police and detained at a torture center during Brazil's military dictatorship. Losing projects and centers was all part of the journey. So was uprooting in order to be transplanted. Frances van der Scott says of being pulled from her beloved Australia for a new assignment: "I went with great sorrow in my heart." P. 52

At times, the Grail was simply not able to put down local roots. Mary Louise Tully tells of realizing that the Grail could not be implanted in Hong Kong, much less China; Mimi Maréchal came to the same realization during her time in Japan.

The reality of life in any movement is that work and community are intertwined, but in Grail life, so is spirituality and religious identity. Realizing that most of our local churches *still* do not value women is frustrating. Remembering the split with the English Grail is instructive. Reading about Magdalene Oberhoffer and Eileen Schaeffler releasing Nucleus members is painful. So is hearing of Grail members' difficult returns after service abroad. I am grateful that these aspects of Grail history are being preserved, so as not to lose sight of their sacrifices.

My next observation sounds contemporary (or, judging from the Mary and Martha story of St. Luke's gospel, perhaps it is perennial). The early Grail was strongly shaped by Catholic Action, which empowered laypeople to DO SOMETHING for the conversion of the world. Maria de Lourdes Pintasilgo and Teresa Santa Clara Gomes even came to the Grail already as leaders from Catholic Action. These sixteen chapters abound with stories about

young women who heard an urgent CALL – some of them willing, even, to leave their home countries to venture for lives of service which I can barely imagine. Attentive to the signs of the times, many Grail founders became active in liberation and social movements, as Bep Camanada says, "The thing that broke through to me in Brazil was seeing God as more the God of history….seeing Jesus as an example of liberation as revealed in the teaching and living out of the gospels." p. 124

On the other hand, monasticism and the Liturgical Movement, with its emphasis on an integration of art and worship, also shaped the Grail. Many of the founders spoke of being drawn by the beauty, simplicity, and carefully planned prayer and liturgy. The Tiltenberg and Grailville instilled the Grail's own adaptation of Benedictine spirituality into young women from around the world. Again and again, the founders speak of openness to the Spirit, of returning to prayer. The Tiltenberg's becoming a Zen center, told in the chapter on Mimi Maréchal, makes absolute sense from this perspective. The balance between the active and the contemplative aspects gave a depth and richness (with all their contradictions and tensions). The introduction to Mimi's chapter reminds us that the Liturgical Renewal Movement was born at a Catholic Action conference.

Again and again, with the wisdom of age, these founders tell of a return to the primacy of spiritual search at the end of their busy and productive lives, like Magdalene Oberhoffer's kinship with the Carmelites and Mimi Maréchal's testimony of approaching death with mindfulness. Bep Camanada tells of attending a meeting where there was a traffic sign for cars that read, "Please slow down." She relates, "I finally said, 'This sign is for me.'" P. 123

The emphasis on spirituality preserves the humility of these very extraordinary women who accomplished/accomplish heroic feats. Frances van der Schott expresses humbly, "My greatest contribution abroad was in keeping the joy going, that Grail spirit of continuing to believe in what I stood for and always staying as the one who believed in people and believed in what I was doing – that kind of youthful spirit. The world did not convert." Later she says, in speaking of the end of her life, "And I hope that I will be surrendered enough to say, "God, here I am, here I come," like that sudden decision that I made when I went to the Grail or when I went from one country to another…[saying] 'Here I am, here I go…." P. 57-59 this response to the Spirit ("The Holy Spirit is the feminine in my book of life" says Eileen Shaeffler p. 148) is a common theme shared by these very diverse leaders

This book completely changed my reading pattern. I could not read it quickly but had to linger, savoring every chapter. This book held my attention for days. I brought it to work and read until late at night. It is a demanding read, because I didn't want to miss even a bit of it! It is even better the second time, having grasped the facts and being able to focus on the heart of the matter.

To Mary and Marian, and all the Grail women who made this book possible – thank you! This book is a treasure, bringing to light to richness of the International Grail. And thank, thank you, thank you to the founders. You may be humble…but we, your Grail sisters, are free to sing your praises! "How beautiful are the feet of the one who comes to bear good news." Isaiah 52:7 your lives will continue to inspire and guide us through the pages of this book.

On Being An Artist In Grail Community *Sharon Thomson* USA

I first met the Grail in 1977 at the Cornwall Center in NY, having already been publishing and performing poetry in New York City for a number of years. I was coming, we thought, for just a year, to "help out" with the work there as needed: tending the grounds, cleaning the houses, participating in planning for a future residential program. We also prayed, and studied and sang songs together; got to know each other; took turns cooking our common meals, shared our well-being and our lives. In other words, we not only did the work, but did it in a particular way, which I later came to identify as Grail Culture.

This first experience of living and working in a Grail community was so utterly transforming that I chose to become a permanent member of the movement, living and working at Grail Centers for most of my adult life, dedicating my skills as a poet, performer, and teacher in service to the Grail. Living out this commitment to function as an artist on behalf of my community has been both a challenge and a privilege.

It has asked certain things of me. It has asked that I create works in response to the needs of the community, that I enlarge my voice to include more than my own personal need for self-expression, that I allow the community to not only inspire but to be actively involved in the process, often having direct input into the final product; and that I develop a way for them to have this input with creative, imaginative results.

But I have also been enriched, my work expanding and developing in ways that would probably never have happened without the context of the community. Throughout the years, I was asked to apply my skills to forms and media that I might never have otherwise considered: speeches, sermons, articles, publicity, website development, grant writing, alternative education, small group facilitation, workshops on poetry writing as a spiritual path, seminars on the Myth of the Holy Grail, programs applying the methodologies of Theater of the Oppressed.

Most importantly, I was given encouragement and support to develop Poetry Ritual Theatre--a concept of interactive, multi-media theater applied to addressing social issues. Directly inspired by my experience of celebrating, praying, and ritualizing within the Grail, public presentations of Poetry Ritual Theatre have taken place among Grail groups throughout the country.

The settings have been as diverse as: a government subsidized housing complex in Cincinnati; a university chapel on the outskirts of Philadelphia; a 450-year-old oak tree in downtown Lafayette, Louisiana; the living room of the Cornwall Center; the oratory at Grailville--a spectacularly beautiful renovated barn of wooden pillars and high ceiling beams in southwest Ohio; the bare, concrete basement of a parish church in the heart of the South Bronx.

The themes for these events have ranged from alternative visions of the "discovery" of America to cancer as an environmental disease to "Do Not Give Way To Evil" to the Search for the Holy Grail. In each of the presentations, participants collaborated on creating the script, music, movement, props, and costumes. In each of the presentations, the "audience" was integrated into the performance and given ample opportunities to also participate.

I often thought to myself: this is the way it once was, long ago, back in time, when the center of life was the campfire, and poetry was a chant, a particular sequence of sound and rhythm with magical properties sung as the voice, and will, and spirit of a people. I have thought: this is the way it was when words and music and movement and images and thoughts and matter and spirit were one, back in time, when all the members of the clan had access to the dimension we now call art, and the artist was not on the fringe but rather, like the fire, at the heart of it all.

For me, the true measure of the importance of the arts is the effect they have on those who participate. Following Poetry Ritual Theatre productions of *Ancient Healing: A Ritual from the Clan of the Not-So-Many-Breasted Women*, the participants living with cancer, their families and friends, told me that it changed them, made them more joyous, less afraid of dying. They reported that what they learned through the text of the script--the environmental connection to cancer, the economics of the cancer industry, the power of focusing on healing rather than curing the disease, the comfort of feeling part of a community rather than isolated and alone--altered their entire perception of the disease and their own power in relation to it.

One participant, who soon after died of leukemia, played the role of a Medicine Woman in Philadelphia. She told me that after the production she went to Cape Cod, planted her bare feet deep in the sand beside the ocean, and read the lines from the script printed below. She read them out loud over and over until she could begin, finally, to reconcile herself with her dying and find some peace in the life that was still left for her.

That, I suppose, is the best and the most that a poet can hope for.

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From Ancient Healing: A Ritual from the Clan of the Not-So-Many-Breasted Women

A Warrior knows she is going to die. But a Warrior loves life.
So she digs her feet deep into the earth until she becomes one
with the life that she loves. She digs her feet deep into the earth that she loves
and listens to the sound of her own heart beating. There, feet down deep,
she hears within herself the sound of the earth's heart beating.

So with her feet she pounds out the sound of the earth beating inside her,
she beats out the love inside her, sending it back into the earth
where it goes back into all that is living.

In this way a Warrior knows that she is one with her people
and she keeps herself brave, she keeps herself free
to live as one with the living.

She keeps herself ready to do what must be done. Feet down deep,
listening for the earth's heart beating out the sound of what must be done,
a Warrior is true to the life that she loves without fear of the time
when her dying must come. In this way, a Warrior can do anything.