

## In Time for Giving Thanks

A brief sweep: interviews with the youngest women working with the US Grail  
—Pamela Cobey

What makes the youngest members of the US Grail tick? Are their perspectives really different from those held by the rest of us? Seven of the youngest women working with the US Grail in our initiatives agreed to be interviewed in response to the following questions:

What brings you joy?

What has shaped your spirituality? How would you describe your spirituality?

What is the work that you love?

What does community mean to you?

What does commitment mean to you?

What are your priorities?

What is your greatest concern for our world?

Their responses are rich, inspiring, refreshing, and yes, uniquely representative of their generation and their own lives as individuals who come from different social contexts. As expected, the youngest members of the Grail, mostly in their thirties, are busy. They are juggling families and jobs—often multiple jobs—and commitments to a wide array of social justice endeavors. The primary joy in each of their lives is found in healthy relationships with loved ones. And while they care deeply about their work and the Grail, family comes first. They seek out relationships with others who are different from themselves and they strive for a world that has room for everyone.

Many of the young women in this group grew up in families that practiced a particular religion, and all of them have come to embody a spirituality that is larger, more diverse and more tolerant through the years. They are not a group focused on doctrine and legalism but in a very real way on love. ‘Just love’ in any of the many ways you might interpret that. It is important to them to respect individuals for the beliefs they hold. In this way, I see them caring deeply about the validity of all individuals’ spiritual paths. They do not wish to be partner to exclusion.

Fortunately, each of these women love the work they are doing: Social Work, Public Health, Church Leadership, Teaching, Fostering Intercultural Understanding, Technology, working with people of all ages. They actively participate in making the world a better place. They prioritize work with women, girls and immigrants. Drawn by their authenticity, others tend to turn to them for mentorship. The youngest member interviewed spoke to the challenges of living with a visual impairment and how she has learned to advocate for herself. She understands that believing in oneself is essential for imagining the real possibilities that await you. Having spent a year working with disadvantaged youth in an inner-city high school, she wants to help others to use the voices she trusts they have to advocate for themselves

Generally, this group identifies isolation resulting from technology as a barrier to community. At the same time, they acknowledge that video chats are a boon for keeping in

touch and they do appreciate them. Still, the best experience is being able to be together from time to time. Community starts out close to home—knowing your neighbors and being there for each other. For an indigenous woman, it is difficult to imagine the possibility of community without the land that the people are a part of. *Mother Earth provides for us. She enables us to take care of each other as we take care of her.* It is heartening to hear that the women who have been meeting in this group have come to depend on each other. They see the bonding they have developed as lasting. Treating others with respect is a marker of their community.

For some of them, commitment means showing up even when you don't want to because you said you would. For one woman, commitment is deeply tied to having good boundaries. Noting that so many women are overcommitted to the point of burnout, having good boundaries helps one to stay involved. Another noted that commitment is not so much a duty, but a faithfulness to open communication, keeping others in the loop and letting them be part of decisions that may change over time. Commitment is not static. Circumstances change, we are drawn to what is most life-giving, let go of an old commitment and answer a new call.

Priorities, like community, begin close to home: taking care of emotional, physical and spiritual health, well-being, and growth, attending to relationships with family and friends, being there for others, and living in harmony with the earth are priorities. Empowerment of women and girls is a clear priority. Having room for everyone at the table is a priority. Justice is a priority. Diversity is a priority. The value they place on integrity and authenticity are implicit in the content of their dialogue.

Concerns for our world vary. They feel concern about the creation of silos that limit ways to know or understand the perspectives of the other, resulting in the de-humanization of the other. They feel concern about racism and the human potential lost as a result. And they recognize the impact of late-stage capitalism on our earth, its peoples, creatures, and environment.

A few of the women interviewed noted that they are not comfortable with conflict and they do not want to be drained by the Grail. They notice harsh tones and words among Grail members. They deeply appreciate the intergenerationality and internationality of the Grail. They recognize that what once worked for the Grail in terms of community does not work for their generation. They note the challenge of spiritual community without real embodiment—meeting each other, getting to know each other, and maintaining a relationship beyond email. They are inspired by generations younger than they are and want more than anything to encourage them, to empower them, to be there for them and at the same time to stand out of their way. May we who are older practice such wisdom.

In short, these women are awesome! We are so fortunate. To all of you who so graciously agreed to be interviewed, who continue to walk with us in spite of our imperfections and the difficulties of the time we are in, we pray that we will encourage you and be there for you when you need us in ways that are really helpful to you. We are ever grateful for the bonds that are growing among you. Thank you, each and every one!