Crossroads

A Newsletter of the Grail International Leadership Team

WE ARE THE GRAIL - THE GRAIL IS US

April 2024

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Editorial
"Memory of Our Journeys: Forging the Future with the Grail Movement"

By Mary Francisca Guimarães

Welcome to the April 2024 issue of Crossroads, dedicated to exploring the richness of cultural and spiritual experiences that make up the individual and collective journey of women associated with the Grail Movement around the world. Knowing and valuing women's memory is crucial, as it reflects not only their individual experiences, but also the collective history and achievements that have shaped their identity and contributions to society. This memory not only preserves the struggles and achievements of all of us Grail women over time, but also serves as a source of inspiration and empowerment for future generations, allowing them to build on the foundations laid by their predecessors.

With this understanding, the articles in this issue address a rich diversity of ideas coming from different perspective, from deep reflections on social justice and global transformation to heartfelt narratives of spiritual growth, each contribution brings a unique and enriching vision to the Grail Movement. The intersection of these ideas, coming from different countries such as Portugal, the United States, Italy, Uganda, Mozambique and Brazil, offers a unique and personal vision of what it means to be part of the Grail Movement.

Each article resonates with a message of transformation and hope. Ticha Vasconcelos from Portugal takes us on an introspective journey, immersing ourselves in her unique spiritual experience. Lucia Mariano Veloso, also from Portugal, shares her heartfelt spiritual journey, highlighting the importance of the search for God in human relationships and mysticism. Mary Kay Louchart, from the United States, inspires us with her reflections on social justice. Carol Siemering, also from the United States, leads us to contemplate the beauty of communion and solidarity within the Grail community, emphasizing mutual support. With the article "Ecosofia" from Italy, we are invited to reflect on our connection with nature and our commitment to environmental sustainability, while Anita Saisi, also from Italy, invites us to delve into the deep meaning of the Grail Movement. From Uganda, Clotilda Bukirna inspires us with her message of love, mercy, and service to others. From Mozambique, the NLT team reminds us of the importance of diversity and collaboration in the brotherhood of the Grail. From Brazil, Maria Aparecida Alves, Lorena, Nígemi, Ivanira and Silvani share their personal experiences and visions about the movement, highlighting cultural diversity as a support to face and overcome local and global challenges. Together, these articles invite us to reflect on the past, embrace the present, and forge a brighter future with the Grail Movement.

In the midst of all these diverse voices, one message resonates clearly: we are the Grail and the Grail is us. United by faith, hope, and love, we are a sisterhood of women who share a common vision of justice, equality, and care for the world around us. And with the support of memory, we point to the future, committed to the present time.

We invite you, dear reader, to immerse yourself in these inspiring stories, to be enveloped by the shared wisdom, and to reflect on your own role in the Grail Movement. May this edition of Crossroads be a source of inspiration and spiritual renewal for us all.

With love and gratitude,

Mary Francisca Guimarães

Crossroads

A Newsletter of the Grail International Leadership Team

Message from the ILT

WE ARE GRAIL – THE GRAIL IS US!

"We are one in the richness of our diversity.
we are many, we are the gleaming rays of light
when the sun touches the crystal."
The Grail Mozambique

It is wonderful to think of the International Grail Movement as the image of the rays of light that shine when the sun touches the crystal. We are these rays of light for each other within the Grail and for thousands of women around the world who are not associated with the Movement, but who were once enchanted and continue to be enchanted by our mission and our vision, embodied and reflected in our action.

In fact, this image is associated with the perception we have of ourselves in the journey we undertake in our spiritual search. "We share the hope that the Spirit will guide us step by step to understand one another. We support one another's searching and discoveries, rejoicing in the radiant colors which the One Light evokes from the crystal."

(Faith Message 1988 – Tiltenberg)

If we think that we are women in "movement", we can say that we are a spiral of light that has crossed its first century and entered a new era carrying this luminous energy. It captivates other women to walk with us because they identify with our values and the ideal of building a world transformed into a better place for all humanity and all forms of life present on the planet.

For all of us, spread across the four corners of the world, our Grail being seems to be very clear and very alive in each of us. We speak the same language of love, solidarity and hope and practice the same "culture of care", although this care may have different nuances depending on the culture in which we are immersed. In all realities we defend life to the fullest!

We are almost always seen as visionary women ahead of our time, even though sometimes we may differ on themes and subjects that at a given moment may be important for some of us, but not for a certain group or countries. Even within the same country there may be different interests, beliefs and expressions of faith. And we often say that this diversity is our greatest richness! We have, little by little, sought to better understand what this diversity means and to deepen the awareness that we need to grow much more in this dimension.

We are the Grail and the Grail is us! A Movement woven from the dedication and lives of many women who crossed oceans and went to live with other women in distant lands with the aim of sharing with them the "newness" that made all the difference in their lives.

But after all, what is our Grail identity?

What unites us and keeps us connected so deeply?

What makes us part of such a unique and diverse Movement?

In this edition of CROSSROADS, which is now in your hands, we have a treasure to be explored!

We invite you to embark on a fascinating read of these Grail women´s journeys about their routes undertaken in the Movement. Each one on her own time, drawing her own story and process of belonging to the Grail!

So much shared wealth! We will, of course, see our own lives reflected in this mirror.

Good reading!

International Leadership Team

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Being a Nucleus Member: A Reflection[1]

By Ticha Vasconcelos – The Grail in Portugal

I love the path You expand through my own inner divisions
(Daniel Faria in: Dos Líquidos)

God, mystery of everlasting Love. I give myself to You in all my freedom, because You called me by my name. I, Teresa Vasconcelos, choose God as "the Center of my life". Guided by Christ, who promised us *Living Water*, I entrust to Him my thirst. Aware of my profound fragility and of the limitations of any human community, I choose the International Grail Nucleus as the place where I hope to continue growing humanly and spiritually, until the end of my days. I take the Grail Vision and Mission as the priority of my life, remaining faithful to them, as they assume different expressions, following the signs of the times. I ask to the Grail community and to my family and friends, here present, to help me in this choice that I make with a peaceful heart. I ask for the strength of the Spirit and for the gift of Faithfulness. Taking Mary as my companion in this journey I say with joy and trust: Here I am!

(*my Dedication*, November 1, 2013)

1. A very personal path

I would like to share some personal thoughts and experiences about being a Nucleus member. Do keep in mind that, I am an active member of the Grail since I was 25 years old (1974), but I only joined the Nucleus around ten years ago, when I was 64, during the 2013 All Saints' Celebration in Golegã, Portugal, together with 34 years Joana Fialho (who unfortunately died some months after her dedication). I am a Christian woman (coming from Catholic tradition). I look at Christ' teachings and example as the core of my search for God, the infinite horizon that holds us. I use physical and psychological practices that make me discover the interior silence I need to be in touch with God. I consider myself a woman-disciple of Christ. I had abandoned the Catholic Church because of a lot of "distortions" that I experienced after the fresh spiritual wind blowing brought by Vatican II. Yet Christ never gave up on me, I think. In 1974 I met the Grail. Yes, the Grail was also a wind blowing for me: the way we celebrated, the aesthetics, the uses of poetry to pray and celebrate, the commitment to "the people" (grassroots work), the relationships, the care for each other, the internationality… the humor and laughter and the capability to play. Christ took me by hand and brought me into a very alive Spiritual women's community. I was then 25 years old and have stayed until today… The Gospels, the Epistles and some of the books of the Old Testament are still my guides. I never cease to explore them – together with other readings and good poetry – in the light of each day of my life.

Therefore take this reflective text as a rather private one, concerning a late decision in my life – joining the nucleus – but no less important than with someone twenty-five or thirty years younger. I cherish the openness of national and international Grail Nucleus, to accept my unusual request. I dare to say that this fact may help us to see in a wider way what it means to be a nucleus member within a women's lay movement… today. After consulting with

[1] This paper is an expansion of a talk I gave in a panel in Kisekibaha in 2013, during the Nucleus formation days in Uganda and Tanzania.

the National Nucleus and the International Nucleus Reference Person (Christa Werner) we moved forward with the process. A few of my friends told me: "Ticha, you will always surprise us….". They were absolutely right: I had been in relationships that didn't work out and I finally came to terms with being a single woman in a women's movement, the Grail. I myself was puzzled too, when I realized that this profound desire could be a call from the Spirit.

2. A Call from the Spirit?

Our lives are *indeed* a mystery! During my mother's last years in Porto I was living in a different town (Lisboa). I changed my entire academic life (especially travelling abroad for presenting papers or doing consultancy) so that I could be closer and care for her, together with my 6 siblings… I travelled almost every weekend from Lisbon into my hometown (Porto) and for several years I used my only month of vacation so that I could be with my dear mother on an everyday basis. *Both of us*, we enjoyed so much this time together: we grew older in such a wonderful manner… on a very simple human, spiritual… even cultural manner. My mother was almost blind and I would read her books aloud for hours and hours: it was the thing that most distracted her. She accepted that reading for some reason had been "taken from her".

Therefore, my starting point is contextual and rather unique. I insist and ask my readers to take it as a single case. When my mother died peacefully at the age of 94, I asked myself: "Now, Ticha, what will be the next step?". I remember telling Christa Werner that when I was 18 years old I read a book by Daniels Rops (a French Catholic writer), *Mort où est ta Victoire?*[1] (Death, Where Is your Victory?). I was then very moved by it. At this present stage in my life I felt the urgent need to read it again. It was out of print and I found it, through the Internet, in a secondhand bookstore in… Brazil! The theme of this novel was about a woman's search for God: this wounded woman went through tremendous turmoil and adventures in her life, but there was remission and forgiveness and, at a quite mature age, she joined a Carmelite convent for a contemplative life. Why had this book puzzled me at my early youth to the point of never forgetting it? Why did I want to read it again when I thought about another radical change? Was this the mystery of the Spirit working inside me…perhaps? It was a kind of "Epiphany", a revelation, like we find in James Joyce. What about joining the Grail nucleus?

3. The Path

Of course, I made my process of discernment and formation (self-formation) requested by the International Grail Nucleus before any commitment. Some of the Nucleus members were my best companions in the Grail: we had a common history and work together, and I was happy with the idea of forming a closer, more contemplative community with them. I wanted to grow humanly, in womanhood and spirituality. I studied many of Grail texts from the past to understand the meaning of being a nucleus member. I took a Bible free course at the Catholic university. Later I studied the complete Works by Teresa of Avila. I read the *Histoire d'Une Âme (The Story of a Soul)* by Thérese of Lisieux.

Teresinha Tavares was my reference person in this process. I took an early retirement in order to become freer for the Grail. I am not going to tell you what I have done so far, you know some of my later commitments. At the age of 64 I made my Nucleus Dedication at the Grail Center in Golegã, during the International Nucleus Reflection Week (October 26 to November 3, 2013). At my request we had planned an Ecumenical Eucharistic Celebration. I invited Bibi, our Grail member from Sweden. Unfortunately her mother became severely ill and Bibi could not travel. The priest, a good friend of mine, presided. The homily was preached both by Anita Saisi (of the Grail in Italy) and my very special friend from my youth, Ana Garrett (presently a Grail member). Father José Manuel closed the homily. Besides Grail people, my large family and a few friends attended the Celebration. What a joy! As I close my eyes I still can "feel" the large multipurpose basement room of Golegã (that some of you know quite well). It looked to me like "a cathedral".

I responded to the questions asked by Christa and Fátima (then our Nucleus reference person in Portugal) saying: "I expect the nucleus to become the *resonance box* that amplifies all my being. I believe that together we transcend ourselves by the work of the Spirit":

· "I want to use my talents and gifts and those that I still may discover, to serve the mission of the Grail in this world with the support of the community".

· "I do my act of Dedication in complete Freedom. May Teresa of Avila help me to say:

If you want me in joy,

For Your love I want to rejoice.

If you send me work to make

I want to die working.

I am yours, for You I was born,

What do you want from me?

(St. Teresa of Ávila)

4. A Colorful Parasol (Sun Umbrella)

Some of us, participants in The Grail, consider that having a nucleus in the Grail does not make sense in today ´s times. I am not so sure of that. Personally, it made sense for me this deeper commitment to God and to the world, in the Grail. Aware that the Grail has evolved throughout 100 years, I assume that the nucleus is evolving too, faithful to the original vision of Fr. Van Ginneken. We may ask: how can laywomen today be spiritually radical, how can they contribute to bring justice to the world, caring for people and the whole creation? By temperament I am a rather passionate person: so far, I have been rather total and absolute in my life choices. This is the way I am. Presently, after joining the nucleus, I became wholeheartedly a celibate woman… or… celibacy chose me… and I am following it. I am totally committed to the Grail, because I love the Grail and I believe that the Grail needs my hands and my heart to activate our Vision and bring forward our Mission, as we continue to be attentive to "the Spirit in all things" (A. Healey).

I think that there is something of radical in this life project. All states of life and any relationship (married couples, single women, nucleus, etc.) are also radical choices like mine. No life choice or "call" is better than the other. Most of us are baptized, others not. We just need, through our discernment with God and the help of others, to go on in the process of finding our right place in the world. We speak about "equality of vocations in the Grail" (A. Healey). I was following other calls in the past "right places", too, but being a nucleus member is my call, now, 10 years after my Dedication. But I want to say that I think that belonging to the nucleus is not just for Catholic members of the Grail… and we have been talking about that. This radical call, I dare to say it, may welcome other spiritual searches (ecumenical or others) including women from other religious traditions. Yes we must read again and again our Vision declaration.

I was part of the team that led, in 2017, the International Formation Program in Ecuador (February 18-26). We were a rather diverse group, and many of the women were newcomers. From what I can remember I was the only nucleus member. Talking about the recognition of our different life choices was not in the initial plan. There was no mention of the possibility of becoming a nucleus member. I insisted that we needed a moment to do that and I was fully accepted by the work team in my proposal. I used a simple image of a beach umbrella composed of a diversity of colors according to our life choices: married, single, divorced, with children, without children, de facto unions, same sex couple, etc, etc … and, of course, being a member of the

nucleus. I insisted that none of these life paths was more important or "holy" than the other, or is supposed to give us more power within the Grail: we just follow the diversity of calls that life presents to each one of us. We are called, yes, to find our "place" … and to be united in the Grail (*Platform N+, 1983)*.

We cannot put people in "boxes" or disrespect each life choice. If we do that, we will not be faithful to the initial and present vision of the Grail as a lay women's movement. For me being in the nucleus has not changed apparently my daily, if you look from the outside: I dare saying that the change is inside. I chose not to invest anymore in my academic career and my research, and to be more available for Grail work. I continually feed my thirst for God with silence and spiritual reading. What does a lifelong commitment mean? Can I speak of a lifelong commitment as of now? I was recently (early December 2023) in Kisekibaha (Tanzania) in a face-to-face meeting of the nucleus work team. I was moved not only by the dedication of two young women but by the renewal of commitment of a group of experienced Grail members. Their faithfulness to their initial call touched me.

5. My Commitment

I recall here a very interesting talk given by Lorna Bowman on *The Meaning of a Dedication* in 2013 at the Golegã's Nucleus Reflection Week. She outlined that "we are a women's movement led by prophetic women!" And she recalled to us that after Vatican II the evangelical counsels shifted from a focus on "personal perfection" to "a person modeled on the life and teachings of Jesus" (p. 48). She referred to Elizabeth Namaganda as someone who had "integrated traditional African cultural practices into her Catholic faith perspective." For her, the promises she committed to in her dedication to the Nucleus "were inculturated into her worldview as a *woman of Africa."*

What does it mean for me, Ticha, to be a poor woman, a celibate woman, an obedient woman, a woman *of God* through Jesus Christ? Can these promises become a choice, a way of life, a path? Are they different from a Grail commitment of a single woman, for example, like I was? At 64, when I joined the Nucleus, can my life be different, can I grow humanly and spiritually, can I be challenged by my Grail Nucleus community and – ultimately – to touch God within me, within others, within the creation, within the world? I said **yes** to that. Therefore, I move into the ***three promises*** *(or vows, values)* named above (I prefer this terminology, it is much more alive, active and dynamic)**:**

To what did I commit myself – a rather experienced Grail member, a retired professor of teacher education, a specialist in early education – when I joined the International Nucleus? What challenges do I face now? What are the challenges for me in the nucleus in today's times? But before reflecting on possible answers I want to assure you, yes, I still think that I did "the right thing." It still makes sense to me, Ticha. With ups and downs, the nucleus is giving me a "new heart": I experience that a broken, old, at times rather individualistic heart, may give birth to a new heart, a heart closer to God and to humanity as a whole, coming out of my deepest fragility and forgiveness. I am presently the convener for the Grail Nucleus in Portugal and I also accepted being part of the International Nucleus team in a time of profound reflection about who we are.

The challenge for me is to think and act according to my choice on an everyday basis: as **a lay woman committed to God** (not a religious, not a "sister") within a community. What are the challenges for me in this "very sacred" and unusual lay community? I quote a small saying by Father Van Ginneken: "Extreme interiority together with extreme exteriority." For the preparation of this paper I enjoyed particularly re-reading the book edited by Marian Ronan and Mary O'Brien, *Women of Vision (2017),* particularly on how the Nucleus was seen in the interviews to Elizabeth Namaganda (Uganda) and Imelda Gaurwa and Honorata Lubero (Tanzania).

I consider myself a rather free spirit: I was non-conventional in my family, in my work and career, with my friends, or the traditions I received in my overall education…. I dared many things not "expected" from me, a "small Portuguese woman", as I usually say. I met a few people that opened my eyes. I never had a traditional career, I always prefer non-formal education, meaningful projects, etc. (Vasconcelos, 2018). Therefore, I have been exploring what the traditional Evangelical Counsels (or "vows") made by so many consecrated church women and men committed to God within a religious community mean to me. Is this kind of consecration possible for lay women like us? These perplexities are part of me, but I insist, I share them from my standpoint, my context, my personal history. I don't know enough about other countries' nucleus realities, even new approaches to the nucleus Promises (Van Gilse, Marguerite, 1964). I am familiar with Beguines' tradition[2] (XV and XVI centuries).

6. My Promises

· **Poverty**

I love things – beautiful objects, shells, clothes (usually second hand, inherited from my sisters), small handicrafts that I bring from all over the world (a beautiful collection of small birds from so many countries), plants, CD's and books, of course, many books! I love cinema, I go to a concert monthly… Arts feed my spirit. Writing is in my genes and I always loved writing. By 8 years old I wanted to become a writer, but that was not possible. The apartment where I live is beautiful and quite comfortable, but it is always open to my family, to Grail people and to friends. Can I give up all these if necessary? I think I can, if someday that makes sense.

I love good food and, on special occasions, a glass of red wine. Can I live and be joyful even if I cannot have that on a regular basis? Yes. What does it mean to live with frugality, aware that so many people in the world cannot have the comfort that I have? I try to live immersed daily in an integral ecology (Pope Francis, *Laudato Si*). I have "el gusto del mundo", a *zest* for the world (Pintasilgo s/d). Some people say that I am quite generous to my family (especially in economic crisis): I like to share. I would say the same with the Grail and friends, with social causes. I always have been quite detached from money. I have enough for me, though, after my father's premature death, still an adolescent, I went through hard deprivations. An old friend used to say: "money that does not circulate, burns your own hands." I love to share what I have, my goods, trying to live like the first Christian communities "and they would sell their property and possessions and share them with all, to the extent that anyone had need (…). Everyday they continued to meet together in the Temple. They broke bread and ate together in their homes, with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying and simplicity of heart." (Act 2:45-47)

Yet, I cannot "impose" detachment on any Nucleus member, as there is such variety about the needs of each one of us….it is the meaning of being a lay woman, that these kind of things should be chosen, not imposed: to follow a subjective "promise" like being poor. I can simply challenge myself into going and acting deeper into the meaning of my own choices and actions. To live an examined life. More important is to avoid "spiritual pharisaism" (Magdalene Oberhoffer, *Letter to the Nucleus*, s/d). I pray that we, as nucleus members, become more *detached* and more able to share our goods and possessions as we share our gifts and talents. Can I live simply and with frugality whether I live in a Grail center, with others, or alone? Can we share frugality across nations and continents, aware that we are so different as Grail members?

A first challenge: What external signs of richness are we modeling for each other outside and within the Grail? How is our relationship with money? Do we truly practice an economy of solidarity? How do we share with people that we don't know? Can we be challenged in our little comfortable life and live with *less* so that *others* may have a decent life and basic human rights?

What about poverty in the *Beatitudes*? I think we need to go deeper on that. What is the meaning of "poverty of spirit"?

- **Celibacy**

For me celibacy means, as I said in my "Commitment": taking God "as the Center of my Life." My life and heart need to become a very "large room with open doors." I will explain to you how I look at celibacy:

- because I want to take God as the center of my life, I want to commit myself to the Vision and Mission of the Grail and to commit myself to the whole community, not just to one person. In order to become faithful to the promise I made, even if I am sick, if I feel lonely or feel rejected or less appreciated and less valued… a *radical* commitment (which *means coming from my roots*, in Latin) is a total and unconditional commitment. I recall here the prophetic words of Van Ginneken: "I only ask to be used."
- in order to achieve that radical way of life, I need to develop a very "broad heart," everyday broader, a heart that is completely open, a caring and compassionate heart with **everybody,** not just with one person, or just with my close friends, or even my family: an *expanded heart – caritas*, unconditional love.
- giving priority to *scaffolding* the Grail in the future (and into the future and with a future) and to be available and committed to that work: God needs my openness, my radical generosity, my time and energies, my joy, my dedication.

I bring here a second challenge: In order to fulfill this aim we need to accept our own fragility and the limitations of the community. Unconditional love means that we help each other to become more fully a *person*, to experience *compassion*, to be able to give up our *big ego* and to listen to what others have to tell me, especially my nucleus community: to purify our hearts, to renounce, to go deeper in our capacity of attention. Aware that celibacy means that I am invited to live in "lateral" relationships with each other, blessing our differences, but also affirming that no one of us is more important than the other? We are all called to serve the Grail in a variety of ways…not forgetting to serve and care for one another.

What may be the meaning of raising a family in the Grail, how to help these families to achieve their fullness? How can Grail children become a responsibility of the whole community? We all need to have enlarged hearts, not just nucleus people. What if a Grail member coming from another Christian denomination wants to become a Nucleus member? How can we open more our "enlarged heart" to her?

Celibacy – at least for me –, is to dare looking inside with lucidity, confronting my inner self, sometimes quite dark, full of smallness, pettiness, greed, envy, skimpiness, my envy and ambition, thirst for power, need to dominate or to be constantly self-incensed. That confrontation with myself opens me to "fraternal correction," learning to ask for forgiveness, recognizing errors and let myself be challenged without loosing self-respect. I believe that I am God's daughter, temple of the Holy Spirit. Celibacy also means loneliness. This is apparently contradictory, but I don't think it is: we can feel solitude within the community, even a community of faith. I may feel alone at times, but I trust that I am one with God. I am inspired by Teresa of Ávila and her "interior castle" (seventh mansion). I have the sign of resurrection facing me[kg1] .

· **Obedience** (the hardest promise for me…)

I love my freedom. Some people usually say: "you are a free spirit." I have been quite independent all my life. I am a rather adventurous person. I was rebellious, I transgressed so many things in my youth. By caring for my mother until she died, I finally understood what it means to have *my own freedom conditioned*: through my mother I received the gift of obedience to an important call and I obeyed to that call. Then the challenge was: And now? Do I go back into my comfortable, safe, rather peaceful little life and enjoy my retirement? Or do I give myself into a different kind of obedience and, *in freedom*, offer my freedom to God through the Grail? (Pintasilgo, 1965). Am I able to totally give myself to the ***Grail Vision and Mission*** in a more radical way (from my roots, I repeat) by joining the International Nucleus? Do I want to accept my life being limited by the *zest* for Grail work? After my reading of each day's liturgy I pray the Grail Vision (as suggested by Patricia Gemmell at the IGA 2017). I try to "chew" on it to the point of having at the core of my being a nucleus member.

Another challenge: What does it mean, *discernment* within the community – *I belong where I'm needed* (Elizabeth Reid, a Grail member in Australia). How do we choose where to go, what to do? *Obedience* means for me to hear: more than just to listen, to obey to my inner call, with the help of the community. Am I ready for that? Can I put myself under scrutiny? What does it mean to *obey* Jesus' teachings? What is discipleship? (cf. Joan Chittister on the meaning of *Discipleship,* 2023). What does it mean, being disciples of each other? (Pintasilgo, 1965)

The Grail becomes the open cup of mine/your/our life affirming a culture of listening and of care: to "obey" to the Grail Vision and Mission – balancing action with an absolute need for silence and contemplation… prayer – drinking from the cup that may be the chalice of suffering, but that is simultaneously the chalice of joy and fullness.

Because I gave my freedom… I keep my freedom… I receive back my freedom…

7. Summarizing:

I tried to develop a personal reflection about my everyday path into another **state of life**, by outlining some challenges that I see for myself in the nucleus, but I insist, out of my personal context.

Deliberately I used the word nucleus with a capital letter (Nucleus). There is no reason for that when we use "married", "single", etc. I see the nucleus as a state of life, like marriage or other life choices… like my "sun umbrella" in Ecuador. None is better than the other. That is how it needs to be… I just see that my availability for the Grail being different, yet I am not so sure. I always considered myself a committed Grail member. But now, I see that commitment becoming a *service*. There is a level of spiritual dimension in my life that I never experienced before, as if *I would be possessed* by the Grail (Núcleo Internacional do Graal em Portugal, 2007): and with that comes a more rooted human being. At least for myself. The promises we make may be multiple: in the nucleus, we can have different calls and various commitments, yet the center of our lives is God *(Maureen Fiedler[3])*.

My final challenge is that I may achieve a *fourth promise.* It is ***the promise of Joy*** – a joy that comes from the *living water* that Jesus is for me and that I share with others within the Grail as well as with the multiple communities we may belong to; a joy that comes from faithfulness to the *Beatitudes*; the joy of fullness and peace because we want to continue giving it all; the joy of nurturing abundant fruits; the joy of *patience* because we know that we are part of a (rather) limited community, yet a community of the Spirit; the joy that comes from *com-passion* hoping that with the help of each other we become better women, true daughters of God, temples of the Holy Spirit: to be joyful even when there is loneliness, sickness, physical or psychological pain.

I want to affirm the possibility of different paths on being a nucleus member in a lay women's movement: we may be invited to follow different *inner calls* – "blessed the space between us….", as we learned to say. We must accept these *different paths*. We need to experience ***unity*** in that. May we become **joyful** exactly because of that.

Personally, I do want that **gentle joy**, I need to accept that it is not an easy or smooth path, that I may live in permanent (dis)unquietness, (like Portuguese poet Fernando Pessoa's *Book of Disquietness*), sometimes quite lonely, other times experiencing deep communion, always challenging my own commitment, aware that it will always evolve. The consequence of that challenge is a non-ending *border crossing* (like Cultural Anthropology usually describes), a non-ending *hospitality* to the one that is different: especially within the nucleus. What a life project! But simultaneously a non-ending hospitality to the One that comes as a "breeze" (Book of Kings, 19).

To Christ, who promised us *Living Water*, I entrust my thirst. Consequently I choose *to* ***joyfully dance with the Spirit.***

Therefore I pray Mt 3-12:

Happy are the gentle:

for the earth will be their heritage

[1] Daniel Rops. "Mort où est ta Victoire?" Paris: Livres de Poche.

[2] The **beguines** were lay Catholic women who practiced together an ascetic life, almost like in a convent. They were involved in the work with the poor and the sick, as well as to other works of charity but they were no obliged to cloistered life and public vows. We may still find "béguinaires" in Belgium (Brussels and Ghent) as well as in the Netherlands. The relationship between beguines and the Catholic church was contradictory and troubled. They had "too much freedom" which was very disturbing for many men, especially the clergy. (Wikipedia)

[3] Fiedler, Maureen (2013). Pobreza, castidade, obediência: Votos tradicionais redefinidos para o século XXI(Poverty, Chastity and Obedience: The traditional vows redefined for the XXI century)http://www.ihu.unisinos.br/noticias/521154-pobreza-castidade-obedi…adicionais-rredifinidos-para-o-seculo-xxi-artigo-de-maureen-fiedler. Consulted: November 4, 2015.

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Crossroads

A Newsletter of the Grail International Leadership Team

Being Grail My Way

By Lúcia Mariano Veloso - The Grail in Portugal

I entered the Grail in 1978, 46 years ago! My companions from the group I belonged to at the time, who were so important in my growth, are no longer here.

My identification with the Grail was not easy. There was a lot to learn in my life as a Christian woman, despite having absorbed some essential experiences from other Christian movements. The Grail was for me like a high-speed train into which I entered at some stop in the middle of my demanding life as a professional and a mother of a family, and I adapted to the movement with some difficulty.

The first task was to internalize my faith, knowing why I believe, and knowing how to live that belief on a daily basis. To throw out the things that occupied my way of believing and that were nothing more than small formulas made up of habits, small myths with no inner life. There were many doubts that had yet to be resolved, and I came to feel that doubt is part of the search that life demands of us on a permanent basis.

The second thing I learned was to integrate everything that was part of my life into the Grail life itself. At meetings, we brought and took our experiences. We brought family life, professional life, the wear and tear of time and our frustrations; we carried the hope of changing something, in permanent growth. Everything was discussed, everything was communicated and thought about and the prayer at the end had a sense of union with others and with God.

The third thing I learned was the meaning of the celebration as a party, searching in beautiful words and the beauty of symbols for the deep meaning of God's life and love. To give new meaning to prayer, internalize gestures with meaning, create the intimacy of songs, words and silence.

Today my life is almost an identification with what I learned: that we can do something, create, despite our fragility and insufficiency, but with an almost collective will in which we all share the same grace, the same light and the same gifts. I think the Grail made me different, pacified me, gave me profound reasons to live. I valued thought, study, reflection, conversation to exchange experiences, moments of prayer and love with a deep meaning, but without pain for faults, without pain for failures, without painful flagellations, accepting everything as life that strengthens us and at the same time limits us.

Lúcia Mariano Veloso (President of the National Leadership Team Portugal)

Crossroads

A Newsletter of the Grail International Leadership Team

The Grail

By Carol Siemering – The Grail in the U.S.

We sisters of the Cup
together
in sun-day
Bread and song
the longing back
and new again

blue sky and broad field
that brings
the frightened secret
nights of us
to light
to share
to trust…

see, we have all known
pain
lain lonesome
in its arms
it is here we meet—
as if each separate
grain unique
and yet together
more—
sand that fill the shore

do you see then
this kin-dom here
built upon these sands
rising from them
challenging the ocean
as it stands
and fades
all impermanence.

we too shift
are drawn in
touched and turned
spat out perhaps
churned by roiling water
owned by it
freed from it

yet still, (oh wonder!)
somehow maintain
this kin-dom's
fluid solid base—
face to face
and outward turning—
gathered and begotten
at the same time

we sing and pray
work, play
drink, wish merry
feel weak and strong
wear worker's boot's
and aprons

are women
oh, are women
touched and touching
sands together—
an uncertain shore
but more…

yes more!

———

written after an anniversary gathering at Grailville in the 70's and adapted for the U.S. 2017 General Assembly

Crossroads

A Newsletter of the Grail International Leadership Team

ECOSOFIA

By The Grail in Italy

"WE ARE GRAIL—GRAIL IS US" – What does a Grail identity mean as a women's movement, journey, search, international organization and spiritual connection?

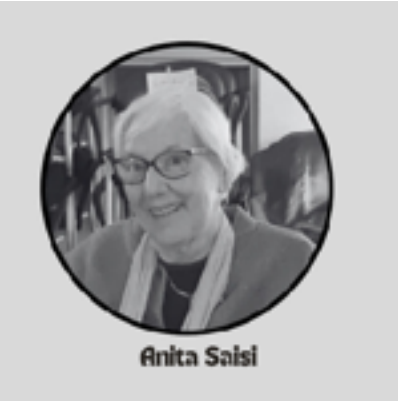
We are sending you a photo of the group of European Grail members and 2 YWLP (Young Women Leadership Program) women from Africa who gathered in May 2023 for a 6-day Ecosofia workshop at Rose Rodrigues' agritourism and organic/sustainable family farm Pirapora, in Calabria in Southern Italy. Ecosofia is a spiritual and experiential exploration towards a deeper communion with our Mother Earth. We are honored to be able to share this experience with our Grail sisters. Being together, asking ourselves what connections we need with Nature, and how we individually and collectively can contribute to the well-being of our planet and shared humanity makes us feel like we are fulfilling the Grail Vision and responding to the signs of the time.

Crossroads

A Newsletter of the Grail International Leadership Team

The Vision of the Grail

By Anita Saisi - The Grail in Italy



When I think of the spirit that makes the Grail alive, these words come to my mind:

A continuous search with the desire to discover who we are and how is the world we live in.

Enthusiasm for what we discover and that has the power to change our life and that of the others

Sharing among different women animated by the same spirit

Consciousness of our talents and wanting to let them flourish

Belonging that bonds us together and that let us free at the same time

Love for nature and taking care of her

Courage to go on, even when we would say it is enough, thanks to our commitment

Passion for what the Grail has been, is and will be

Great joy to have met women who create in us admiration and love

Being sure that the Grail makes our life rich with its challenges

Fidelity to the spiritual dimension by accepting new experiences

To live the vision of the Grail is a task to reach, that asks trust in oneself and in others

To create projects that help us to transform the vision into mission

To know that other women have gone through this path reassures us

To wish that other women may meet the Grail and become part of it

Openness to the world in the international meetings with women of different cultures

All this and much more is the Grail because the Grail is a symbol and the symbol is:

“A sign that contains a secret meaning, it is the epiphany of a mystery”. (Gilbert Durand)

The symbol hides something that goes beyond its representation, and for this reason is prophetic.

Crossroads

A Newsletter of the Grail International Leadership Team

We are Grail - Grail is Us (The Mystery of Faith)

By Clotilda Bukirwa – The Grail in Uganda

Dear members of the Grail International Christian movement, I greet you in the love and peace of the Lord Jesus Christ!

I take this opportunity to reflect more on my Spiritual life with you, knowing that what I share is from within my true self a Christian rooted in the Catholic faith. This means I am rooted in Jesus Christ who is the body and soul. Jesus is the power of my body and soul, Christ is the body, and we are His parts. Each part has a function in terms of faith growth thus building God's kingdom.

Grail is not visible, but we are the image of the Grail which is Christ, this means as long as I provide services among the others — whether Grail or other people, I am revealing Christ who lives with me.

Our role as the followers of Christ Jesus who was crucified, died buried, and rose from the dead is:

- Christ loved us all abundantly, so we must love each other like our teacher, master.
- Christ showed mercy to all, let us do the same to each other.
- Christ helped the needy, let us do for them.
- Christ was generous to all, let us all be.
- Christ healed and nursed and restored life for many, let us pray in His name things will happen (changes will occur in us)
- Christ brought peace among His apostles, let us be peacemakers in the Grail community and the society around us. If the world is not at peace we must bring peace, love, and unity among the Grail community and the world, therefore, at the end of time Jesus Christ, who called us the Grail International, will gather in His kingdom of peace.

Let us strive to be together as Grail Women of Nazareth did before us. The present women are expecting us to better-standing pillar for all. As we are preparing for the celebration of the risen Christ, let every Grail be visible in her virtue/gifts given to her for making Christ known to the World. "Let your light shine" in the new Century.

Love and prayer,

Clotilda Bukirwa

Crossroads

A Newsletter of the Grail International Leadership Team

We are Many and We are One! (*)

By The Grail in Mozambique

We are one,
we are a crystal
we are many,
we reflect the light,
in infinite radiant colours.
We are one,
we are women of faith,
we are many,
our faith
reflects different experiences and expressions.
We are one
in the richness of our diversity
we are many,
we are the gleaming rays of light
when the sun touches the crystal

We are atoms,
this whole made up of small parts,
we are atoms, parts of an even greater whole.
Each and every one of us, as a whole,
we are many small parts
of this whole that is the Grail,
we are one, we are the Grail as a whole,
in this sea of us
that transforms us into an ocean
of diverse ideas, tastes, scents and love....
each one representing,
a member and part of my single body,
this body that is also the Grail.

We are many and unique
and we are also one,
one big tree,
held together by the same root,
feeding on the same sap,
exuding the same heat,
adorning ourselves with the same flowers
looking for the same fruits,
living a culture of care!
Our multiplicity of Gifts
has allowed
cross-fertilization
that contributes
to the enrichment
of the "One" and the "Many"!

We are many and sometimes scattered,
We are clouds in the sky
softly formed
parading a serene lightness
and, perhaps, insecure and defenceless.
In a sigh,
the delicate clouds take shape and strength
and pour their might over the dry land,
and there we are one,
laying down the essence of our being!

We are many and we are one!
United by the strength of hope and love
we are a strong and unflinching beam.
We are many and we are one
in Unity in Christ.
We are many and we are one
when we unite in prayer
in the moments of Joy and Sorrow
of each of us!
In our hands we are many,
in the Greatness of Life, we are one!

We are many and we are one,
As we pass the Holy Grail,
which you delivered to the Apostles
on the night of the Last Paschal Supper,
from one to many others!
The Grail of your generous blood,
scorching, intoxicating blood which we take,
drink and make ourselves one,
to become women
of restless and adventurous blood,
always in pursuit,
permanent and profound,
transforming ourselves
and transforming the World,
eager
to leave it better
for the generations to come!

We are many and we are one,
together we take firmer steps!
We are many and we are one,
one woman's plight
is also the plight of many other women.
Together, in sharing, in companionship and in union,
cultivating mutual respect,
we continue to grow
and we are stronger
in our desire to make the world
a fairer and friendlier place,
harmoniously integrating
the Work of Creation!

We are many and we are one,
when
our ideas,
bring visible effects to society
always cultivating the spirit
of helping our neighbours in our lives

"In the beginning we had doubts, many
and of that we were certain"...
...and despite those doubts,
we held on to each other!
We continued weaving together,
until we became one
in soul
and heart and reason!
WE ARE MANY AND WE ARE ONE!

(*) A joint text, drafted with the contributions of each of one us and compiled by Ida Alvarinho

Crossroads

A Newsletter of the Grail International Leadership Team

Fragments of My Story in the Grail Movement

By Maria Aparecida Alves - The Grail in Brazil

I got to know the Grail Movement at the end of the seventies, when I was between fifteen and sixteen years old, through Lalá Diniz, who at the time was my teacher in the accounting course, at the São João Batista school, in Pirapora-MG.

It was a moment of great restlessness, liveliness and changes in my life and also in the history, not only of Brazil, but of all Latin America, in which most countries were struggling to get out of dictatorial regimes.

At the time, perhaps, I had no dimension of the greatness that it would be to participate in a Women's Movement. There was no systematized training process, nor was there a specific moment in which we became members of the formal system, as there is today.

However, we knew the History of the Movement and discussed relevant themes for the formation of a critical consciousness about the political conjuncture of the country, women, feminism, faith and many others.

The Grail Movement in Brazil had dispersed as a result of the Military Dictatorship. However, some women such as Lalá, Elizabeth Caminada, Betinha and Alice Duddy, among others, kept the Movement alive, even if in a very discreet way. These women had a twinkle in their eyes, a vitality and a vitality.

We don't have many records of this moment in the history of the Grail in Brazil. It's all very fragmented. Just as fragmented are my memories from almost half a century ago.

Crossroads

A Newsletter of the Grail International Leadership Team

The Women Who Inspired Me

By Lorena Valentina de Almeida Melo - The Grail in Brazil

To talk about the Grail, I need to talk a little about myself: My name is Lorena Valentina, I am the seventh child of 8 siblings, I was born in the month of spring. I had the opportunity to see the enchantment for social struggles blossom, since I was always an active child, very participative and always wanted to make a difference (I didn't want to be part of the statistics already imposed by society).

The Grail Movement has always been present in my life, since I was a little girl I participated in the activities of this movement, because my Aunt Arlete was already part of the Grail and she was always our reference in the family and my mother's best friend (Cândida Valentina de A. Meloque (Present! - who passed away a few months after her commitment to the Grail; fortunately, my mother fulfilled a dream which was to be part of this Women's Movement).

My aunt Arlete was our great mentor within the Grail, because wherever she went she took my mother and I loved to go with her. So, from an early age I was a young woman involved with projects and very active in my community and in Grail. I was for a long time, in the leadership of the group of young girls, and also in the area of technological inclusion/coordinating the digital station (which was the first digital center in Buritizeiro, where I worked with my boyfriend, who is now my husband and who is also part of the Grail programs). I was assisted by social programs, which invested in my training and which I gave back through my work in the communities.

I admired those women, "different", colorful and only after many years did I understand that they were free, decisive women... I can tell you that the Grail women I met were beyond their time: And guess what, I wanted to be that way (different too). And I became.

The Grail Movement in Brazil is part of my social journey, of my personal formation (in this journey I had my Daughter Alicia, who has also been growing within the Grail Movement, as a sign of a new journey that is beginning, took her first step on a Sunday morning in the assembly of the Grail). I can say that each of these women has inspired me to be who I am.

As I write, I am remembering each one of the women of the Grail (at this moment that I write, I started to cry with emotion for reliving my moments with you), the smile, the hug, the words that fill the heart and that affirm that I am not and will not be alone, because I am part of a Women's Network that strengthens and transforms me every day.

And just like that, my cup dries up overflowing.

Crossroads

A Newsletter of the Grail International Leadership Team

Women of the Holy Grail – Overflowing the Chalice of Courage and Faith

By Nígemi Becheleni - The Grail in Brazil

We are the Grail. The Grail is ours. My journey in the Grail was collecting flowers and carrying stones. Such was my journey of 47 years in the Grail Movement. Having a spiritual journey of much transformation and overflowing my cup.

In the beginning, it was a great learning of spirituality, prayer and rituals of washing feet, savoring bitter foods and the Divine in Holy Communion. Christic Experience in dances and rituals, Chalice Benedict and Flag of the Divine.

In the years of my youth, I was looking for the Grail and I was found. Looking for meaning in life, companionship, women who would fight together with me for a better world.

Those were difficult years, Brazil oppressed by a military dictatorship, where misery and fear went hand in hand in the cities, on the outskirts of the cities, in the countryside, in short, throughout the country.

We were agents of Liberation Theology.

We were young, we lived in the Grail community. We were afraid, of course, the dictatorship was bloodthirsty and perverse, but even so, we went ahead with our project of struggles in the communities and favelas, seeking to raise awareness of human rights, rights that are denied to the majority of the Brazilian population.

We are engaged in the struggle for democracy, with the Popular Movement "Diretas Já", for the return of better living conditions in our country.

Women of the Holy Grail overflowing the chalice of courage and faith.

Yes, my spirituality was and is connected to my social actions and to my living Goddess. I am in balance: heart + prayer + action, taking care of the creation of the Creator, who is together with the created. My actions bring about the strengthening of my self and fill my cup of well-being. That's faith.

Into the future, with faith and courage, I carry the half-full and half-empty chalice, collecting experiences of a life well lived.

And so, I go, we go. The Grail is the way.

Crossroads

A Newsletter of the Grail International Leadership Team

The Grail Movement: A Defining Moment in My Life

By Ivanira do Monte Oliveira - The Grail in Brazil

Listed here are five key points that characterize my journey in the Grail Movement, which began in ....

1. My entry into the Grail: This happened at a time when I was looking for something that would complete me spiritually. I felt welcomed in this group, at that moment, that was fundamental for me.

2. I became a more accepting and adaptable woman, becoming welcoming and understanding of differences and allowing myself to be cared for.

3.My biggest challenge was to understand the Grail, as a network, having a worldwide proportion. It was something, until then, out of my reality. It was necessary to open my mind and my heart to finally understand that something so comprehensive would impact individual women.

4. Participating in the Grail Movement was a major game-changer. From my experiences in the group, I was able to open myself up to understand more about my spirituality, in a more sensitive and comprehensive way.

5. Today, I still see myself as a piece in transition, in change and learning, in many aspects. And I aspire to become an important component that can actively contribute to the movement.

Crossroads

A Newsletter of the Grail International Leadership Team

We are the Grail – the Grail is Us

We are blessed because we have inherited the Grail!

By Silvani Valentim - The Grail in Brazil

Elected at the November 2023 Assembly, in mid-January 2024 the new National Leadership Team[1], which in Brazil we call the Board of Directors, will take office. We take on this challenge with all our humanity, humility, patience, and faith.

Notice that the term "humanity" evokes our limitations. That which leads us to humility. Both are very important to maintain the loving balance between the different associates of the Grail (members, as we call them in many countries). Patience is an important virtue. But first of all, faith. After all, we are a community of women who are spiritually structured from this principle. It is very common in Christian, Judeo-Christian and other religions such as those of African and Indigenous origins to discover God in history, that is, in human relationships.

God is also discovered in mysticism and sacred symbols, in common union. The communion that is expressed in the search for God seeks to answer fundamental questions in the midst of suffering and chaos. In Brazil there is a song called "Cálice," (Chalice) by the composer Milton Nascimento , which will tell us about this chalice and this suffering.

In 2022, in one of our Grail celebrations, during a reflection I was invited to give on the Beatitudes, I said that the Sermon on the Mount is considered by many people to be one of the most important sermons of Jesus Christ. It is so named because Jesus uttered it on the slopes of a mountain, supposedly near Tiberias (west shore of Lake Gennesaret).

The Beatitudes (Matthew 5:1-12) are so called because of the initial word used by Jesus in all of them (a total of seven) and speak of qualities, virtues and good living. The Beatitudes are elementary pillars of the Christian faith, which in Hebrews 11:1 is described: "it is the assurance of what we hope for and the evidence of the things we do not see".

In our particular case, women of the Grail, it behooves us to ask: how have we been blessed? How have we sought to be well adventurous in these more than 100 years of history? The Grail in Brazil began in 1949, 75 years ago. Do we seek to live in harmony and respect with nature and the environment? In our practices and reflections (praxis), do we recognize traditional peoples and communities and oppose environmental racism? Do we oppose the oppressions suffered by girls, women, LGBT communities, for example?

Rachel Donders (Grail of Holland) said, and this I have heard from her own lips: that we need to be aware of the meanings and the dialectic that surrounds the knowledge of the dawn and the evening of the Grail. It is important that this awareness occurs in the daily life of our actions, from the simple to the most daring, in the dynamic process of building the Movement.

We are blessed because we ask ourselves questions that challenge what is established as we aim for social, technological, communication and information transformation.

This realization ignites us with energy and joy to carry out our works, actions and to animate and be animated by the Grail. We are women on the move. We are blessed because we dream and have impetuous courage. We are blessed because we have inherited the Grail!

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1. The 2024-2027 Management Board is composed of: Silvani, Mônica, Valéria, Ivanira, Maria, Janaina.

Crossroads

A Newsletter of the Grail International Leadership Team

We Are Grail, Grail Is Us

By Mary Kay Louchart – The Grail in the U.S.

The first time I went to Grailville in 1962 is when for me this spiritual journey of search and commitment began. There I found myself

•meeting an intergenerational community of joy-filled, incredible women

•going to the Oratory and feeling the energy and faith of the women who went before me

•singing and feeling: "to you Oh God, with a joyful heart. I have offered these gifts. And I have seen with great joy, the people who are present"

•being part of a lived community in Grailville — which I believe is key to continuing to share this journey with others (opportunity to live in community.)

•joining a group of women committed to the transformation of the world

And I've grown over the years. It is one thing to read about poverty and injustice and climate change. It is another to experience it. I grew up in Michigan in an area surrounded by Mexican migrants working in the fields and then lived in a "white flight" city that was 60% Black. (People coming from the South of the U.S., having been promised jobs and housing in the North — the jobs were there, but the housing wasn't!) I saw, experienced and worked with inequalities I could not have known if I had stayed in the little village where I lived as a young child.

Then, my vision expanded even more when I attended an IGA in Portugal and heard my Grail sisters from various countries speaking about their realities. And when I started travelling to some of these places in Mexico, Uganda, Brazil, Tanzania plus living in the South Bronx, NY, my horizon was broadened even more. Coming to understand the situation of women around the world … I sometimes thought of the song: "*Sometimes I wish my eyes hadn't been opened. Sometimes I wish I could no longer see, all of the pain and the hurt and the longing of my Sisters and me as we try to be free*…" BUT, the reality is: my eyes were opened wider and wider each time I met up with my Grail sisters. And my journey continues within that reality.

Along this journey, there have certainly been challenges. It's a bit hard to recall all of this 62-year Grail journey! When things were happening in the U.S. Grail that didn't seem to be what I thought this Grail Search was about, I got even more involved in the Grail internationally. Even though I felt more like I belonged in some countries, there I could see similar problems or questions, and they also made me realize that I had to not totally abandon what was my reality by moving to Mexico, or Portugal or Uganda, but stay and work in the "heart of the monster" as the USA is known. The USA Grail sometimes takes on too many qualities of what I consider not-so-good about the USA.

There was a time when I thought: the Grail wasn't where I should be journeying …. So, I looked elsewhere. The truth: the grass was not greener on the other side and in the end: nothing compared with what I found in The Grail — what I consider a real treasure.

Looking to the future of the Grail and perhaps my role in it? I see my role as continuing to encourage young women to join this incredible journey. The path along the way will look a bit different from mine, but it is the same journey. There is a part of me that would like a quiet, hermit-type life! I do take time every summer (northern hemisphere summer) to be quietly in nature, but even there I often share that time with young women. And at the end of the summer, I tell myself: OK, Mary Kay, keep on keeping on. There are young women searching. You have a treasure to share. Share it. Keep involved in the Commission on the Status of Women with bringing girls and young women to that U.N. session. Keep on working with the Young Women's Leadership Program. Stay participating with the incredible young women on the Young Women's International Team. So here I am.

CALL FOR ARTICLE CONTRIBUTIONS

For the next issue of the Crossroads, the theme is about:

"ABUNDANT CREATION"– We are born into a many-splendored world, a creation of breath-taking beauty and mind-boggling diversity. Yet we live in a time when it is all under imminent danger as we witness loss of species and destruction of whole ecosystems. We cannot love what we do not know. Show us the beauty and wonder of the natural world that you call home and that gives you home. What is unique in your region of the world and what is at risk? What are the indigenous systems and keystone species in your area? What ways do Grail members and others work to save species and reduce harm to ecosystems? What partners and synergies do you find for this huge calling, to prevent ecological disaster?

We invite you to submit your article contributions to the International Secretariat: iltsecr@thegrail.org on or before **AUGUST 25.**