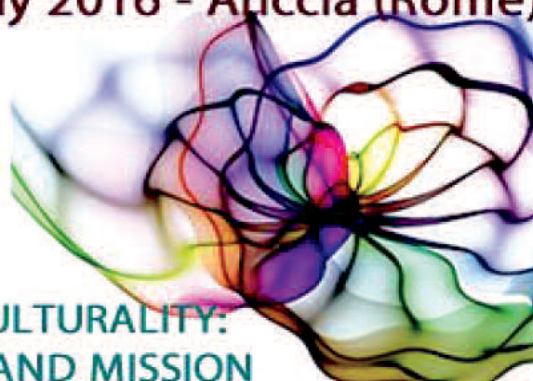


Bulletin 2016

Vol. 48, No. 5/6 - May-June

SEDOS SEMINAR 2016

2-6 May 2016 - Ariccia (Rome)



INTERCULTURALITY:
LIVING AND MISSION

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*** Correction:**

front cover of last issue:

Bulletin 2016, Vol.48, 3/4, March-April.

Editorial

Interculturality has become a buzz word today not only among the religious congregations but in the world in general. The impact of globalization, the digital age, post-modern culture



Lazar Thanuzraj Stanislaus

and various other factors have led many to think more deeply on the aspect of interculturality. People are on the move, going from one place to another or from one country to another for work or living in a new place. As people move and interact with one another, there is a cultural exchange. This interaction brings changes to one's own culture, life styles and environment. Thus, today one experiences not monoculture or multi-culturality, or crossculturality but inter-culturality. In the secular world too, intercultural relationships, living and working together, are gaining prominence and a lot of training is imparted by multinational companies and other Information Technology companies. Many have noted the strength and power of an intercultural working atmosphere, and this brings good working environment to a company, as well as more profit.

More often in recent years, the mission of the Church has witnessed missionaries and people move from South to North and East to West, thus interculturality in the Church has become as part of her being. Moreover, the Church emphasises today the importance of culture, respect of every culture and people. There are some congregations who have placed internationality as a way to live and work in the missions and they have enhanced others and have been enriched by interculturality

in their own congregation and work. But there are many congregations which are struggling to cope up with this reality of interculturality.

Thus, what is at stake today? To have a more profound understanding of culture as well as to be aware of the dynamics of living and doing mission with other cultures seems to be an urgent task. "Intercultural refers to the *sustained interaction* of people raised in different cultural background". Thus *sustained interaction* paves the way for not only tolerance of differences of other cultures, but an appreciation and celebration of difference in cultures. In this process, "living and interaction with other cultures are participation in God's plan, and transforming cultures takes a person to another level."

To understand God's plan in the mission of the religious congregations especially in the context of cultures and people, not only of their work and missionary activities, but also of their living in communities, a seminar by SEDOS was organized on the theme, "Interculturality: Living and Mission" from 2-6 May, 2016 at Casa Divin Maestro, Ariccia, Rome. There were nearly 120 participants consisting of 48 religious congregations who participated in this meeting. Other than from Rome, it is notable that some participants had come from Fiji, South Korea and other European countries.

The experienced and well known resource persons presented their papers. Prof. Diana de Vallescar Palanca gave a talk on *Context and Concerns of Cultural Interactions*, stressing that the intercultural option cannot be imposed from above or by a dominant culture, because this can only be the result of a path and process oriented with all its dynamics and intercultural management. Mons. Sanchez de Toca spoke on *Theological Reflection*

on *Interculturality* exploring the fact that a genuine dialogue between cultures and people is founded in the common search for truth and the absolute, therefore love and truth would be key components to build communities. Jon Kirby, SVD gave two sessions on *Intercultural Competence*; scientific analysis of intercultural growth and various techniques on building competence between cultures were explained. Prof. Martin Nkafu Nkemkia probed on the *East-West, South-North Interactions*; many questions were raised on these interactions of peoples and missionaries and their rightful place in a community. Elisabetta Flick, SA gave a very affirming talk on *The New Ways of Mission Today in an Intercultural Reality*; other than putting forth many challenges to mission, she explained the initiative of the UISG in Sicily regarding the inter-congregational project with migrants.

There were four panelists who shared on their experiences of living and working with other cultures. This gave a challenge for religious on how to respect and reach out to migrants and poor of other cultures without a donor mentality.

Mercedes Leticia Casas Sánchez, FSpS gave a talk on *Multiculturalism and Dynamics of Mission from the Experience in CLAR*, and her reflection on the Latin America mission brought various dynamics of mission especially insisting on the spirituality which should accompany intercultural missionary activities.

The future of religious congregations will depend on how successful we are in improving intercultural life, which denotes respect for every culture, equal in dignity, sharing power with other cultures, openness to grow and learning from one another. The dynamics of intercultural mission impels us to adopt various methods to participate in the *missio Dei* recognizing that missionaries and peoples mutually value one another and are being enriched by one another and together commit themselves to building a just society. The challenges are many, but the spirituality that we cherish and the process that we adopt for working for the holistic growth of every culture, human being and the environment will give success to our ministries.

Lazar Thanuzraj Stanislaus, SVD
(Member of Preparatory Committee
and Moderator of the Seminar)

Contexto y preocupaciones de Interacciones Culturales

La importancia de la conciencia sobre una formación intercultural

Introducción

La globalización o mundialización descubre la realidad unificadora del planeta y su dimensión conflictual, a causa de los diversos antagonismos que emergen entre las naciones, religiones, tradiciones ancestrales, modernas y posmodernas, intereses estratégicos y económicos, y los “nortes” y “sures” cada vez más distanciados. Y, ya sea que contemplemos aspectos positivos o acentuemos

los más sombríos, se trata de un fenómeno *irreversible*, con el que tendremos que aprender a lidiar (Da Cámara, 2008). Algunos indicadores del panorama mundial, a modo de un retrato-robot, que marcan específicamente nuestro tiempo, serían:

- Mayor pobreza y explotación irracional de los recursos.
- Explosiones de violencia, fundamentalismos de diverso signo y terrorismo.
- Desarrollo acelerado de las Tecnologías de la Comunicación y de la Información.
- Grandes migraciones y la ola de refugiados, que colocan diversos desafíos a los Estados y las sociedades.
- Liberalización y privatización de vastos sectores del mercado, interdependencia de las economías y deslocalización de las unidades productivas, unida a la exigencia de flexibilidad y adaptabilidad de respuestas.

- Reivindicación de diferente tipo de identidades, por los nuevos movimientos sociales e individualidades.
- CRISIS expansiva.



Diana de Vallescar Palanca

Actualmente la diversidad/diferencias pasaron a ser elementos visibles y constitutivos de nuestras sociedades, y se reflejan en todos los ámbitos sociales, económicos, políticos, religiosos, educativos, sanitarios, mediáticos... Levi Strauss

(1968), subraya que la diversidad cultural, por todas partes, *atrás, alrededor y enfrente de cada uno de nosotros. La única exigencia que podremos hacer para valorizar su lugar es que se realice sobre las formas de cada uno* que deberá hacer su contribución generosa para los demás.

Como es natural, esto se traduce en tensiones, dificultades, grandes preguntas y conflictos, que atraviesan la vida cotidiana y sus relaciones.

Emergen, a nivel internacional, europeo y nacional, aproximaciones y perspectivas que intentan explicar esta nueva conformación de nuestras sociedades, incluidas sus dinámicas y desafíos, basadas en:

- constataciones sociológicas
- opciones ideológicas
- visiones estratégicas
- aproximaciones interdisciplinares, sistémicas o multidimensionales
- procesos y dinanismos
- perspectivas psicosociales y formativas
- o socio-políticas...

A nivel eclesial, también es posible verificar un proceso de *desocultación* que revela progresivamente la figura del ser humano, diverso y cultural, con enormes potencialidades. En este sentido, algunos referentes importantes han sido:

1. La indigenización de la Iglesia, que presupuso la necesidad de incorporar personal autóctono en las diferentes realidades y reconocer así las “iglesias particulares” con sus voces y exigencias (AG, cap. 3), y la necesidad de emprender una relectura de la revelación (Sínodo IV).

2. La introducción de la distinción “Depósito de fe” y distintas formas legítimas de expresarla, vinculada a la apertura de la reflexión teológica al paradigma socio-antropológico (GS 53, 54-56) y su nueva metodología.

3. El reconocimiento de libertad religiosa, impulso del diálogo inter-religioso y del ecumenismo así como los procesos de evangelización de la cultura (E.N.) y la inculturación (entendida como proceso/modalidad de la Encarnación). Este descubrimiento de la diversidad/diferencias culturales a partir de las ciencias sociales impuso una gradual renovación de la reflexión teológica, logrando que esta se aproximara más a las realidades de nuestras sociedades contemporáneas y contribuyó para poner sobre la mesa dicha temática.

En este sentido, también conviene tener presente y explorar, para aprender, cómo el propio cristianismo es el resultado de la confluencia, experiencias y aportes de diferentes grupos étnico-culturales, a lo largo de la historia (De Vallescar, 2005).

Enseñar la condición humana: Unidad y Diversidad

Descubrir y apreciar la figura una y diversa del ser humano en su dimensión física, biológica, psicológica, cultural e histórica no ha sido un proceso fácil. La historia humana revela un continuo de fases vivas, dolorosas, extremas, y de no pocos conflictos, a todos los niveles, que podríamos categorizar como momentos de

(Panikkar, 1999): Indiferencia, Separación/Ghetos, Asimilación, Exclusión, Inclusión, Pluralismo, Paralelismo, Interpenetración, Diálogo.

Es pertinente recordar que nuestras ideas del ser humano son producidas por un paradigma simplificado y reductivo, que divide y desvincula, en lugar de conectar y comunicar. En consecuencia, existe una enorme dificultad para integrar y concebir que lo “uno” pueda ser al mismo tiempo “múltiple”. Ya que esta forma de pensar, en principio tiende a operar separando lo que está vinculado (disyunción), o bien a unificar lo diferente y disperso (reducción).

La propia conciencia «humanista» occidental del siglo XIX, en el fondo, mantuvo una doble entrada, por la cual, subrayó la consciencia de pertenencia a la misma especie humana, al mismo tiempo que reconoció los «verdaderos» seres humanos («nosotros») de los otros (Morin, 1997), apoyada en los nacionalismos, los imperialismos o las colonizaciones que degradaban a los demás, como sub-humanos.

De ahí que, uno de los desafíos o causas pendientes de la formación humana, sea todavía *enseñar la condición humana*, bajo la perspectiva de un sujeto complejo, que piensa, siente, conoce, valora, actúa, se comunica y está situado, al mismo tiempo que estrechamente vinculado a una cultura (como su segunda piel) y al propio cosmos, algo que ya vislumbraron los pueblos de la antigüedad. Esta enseñanza es imposible sin cierta reforma del pensamiento occidental y el trabajo de aproximación desde una perspectiva más holística e integral, que comprenda la interrelación de las dimensiones de la naturaleza, la sociedad y la cultura, de forma sistémica.

Significa también que:

“Para revelar la complejidad del ser humano, es necesario asumirlo en su perspectiva cultural, esto es, en su actividad real y en la praxis que lo integra a la cultura. La cultura como ser esencial del ser humano y medida de ascensión

humana no sólo concreta su actividad en sus momentos calificadores (conocimiento, praxis, valores, comunicación), sino que da cuenta del proceso mismo en que tiene lugar el devenir del ser humano como sistema complejo: la necesidad, los intereses, los objetivos y fines, los medios y condiciones, en tanto mediaciones del proceso y el resultado mismo". (cf. Urdaneta, 2009: 20).

En suma, se trata, de asumir el principio de la *Unidualidad*, por el que el ser humano es plenamente biológico y plenamente cultural, de acuerdo con Morin. Por tanto, más que contraponer patrias, familias, naciones, culturas, necesitamos mostrar sus valores, experiencias sabidurías, explorar y descubrir potencialidades, así como puntos ciegos o carencias, para aprender a vivir conjuntamente. Todo tipo de formación, la profesional pero incluso la de carácter religioso, así como la propia estructuración de las diferentes organizaciones, deben crear condiciones para acceder y garantizar la posibilidad de adquirir la literacia cultural. Y esto pasa por tener presente y asumir el impacto real y concreto de la diversidad/diferencias aunada a la consideración sobre la complejidad del ser humano.

Significa que hay que enseñar y comprender al ser humano de forma integral, una y múltiple, es decir, en su totalidad y partiendo de sus variadas dimensiones, al tiempo que exploramos para comprender sus interrelaciones profundas y procuramos articular también los principios del orden y desorden, de la separación y la unión, de autonomía y de dependencia, que son dialógicos, en el seno del universo (Morin 1999).

Pero además es importante considerar el criterio de la unicidad ya que este potencia aspectos de carácter psicológico, relacionados con la responsabilidad social y la determinación de la realización propia, y sostiene que la identidad radica precisamente en la diferencia, más que en lo parecido. Y, en derecho, esto supondría la

asunción del principio de autorrealización diferenciada, del que se desprende que todo espacio vital y de desarrollo (a pesar de ser un solo sistema), y dicho sea de paso, la comunidad es uno de estos espacios de desarrollo y crecimiento, debe tener presente que cada persona juega un papel importante y diferente, con su propio tiempo y, posibilidades de realización. Dicho en otras palabras, la condición histórica y terrena del ser humano, es potenciada por cada uno, en función de la vivencia de su propio espacio y temporalidad.

Por lo tanto, toda formación debe tener como punto de partida la subjetividad y la diferenciación sociocultural, de todas las diversidades (individuales, étnicas, culturales, sociales). Requiere forjar un lenguaje y procedimientos que alcancen a incidir sobre los sujetos y sus variaciones culturales, así como construir un modelo de organización que les considera también desde sus caracteres biológicos, psicológicos fundamentales y culturales. En esta perspectiva todo (supuesto) de currículo universal, es puesto en causa.

En el panorama mundial la ambigüedad *está servida*. Las luchas por el poder, las políticas y las problemáticas públicas, que otrora giraron esencialmente sobre el eje del análisis socioeconómico, hoy abrieron su espectro relevando la dimensión simbólica cultural y religiosa. (Hall, 1997^{a,b}; Touraine, 2004; Wieviorka, 1997). Sin embargo, a esa mayor sensibilidad por la diversidad/diferencias, no se corresponde con el aumento del clamor de los miembros o grupos minoritarios (étnicos, migrantes, culturales, refugiados...), discriminados, excluidos o invisibilizados, por cuestiones de identidad vinculada a sus dificultades de acceso a la riqueza, servicios y los beneficios económicos, falta de respeto por sus derechos fundamentales e igualdad de oportunidades, etc., a causa de un sistema neoliberal feroz, que no respeta la naturaleza, la dignidad humana y las diferentes culturas y sus propuestas de un mejor mundo habitable.

Emerge también el imperativo de desarrollar una crítica lúcida unida al posicionamiento ético, por el que no es posible aceptar una “lealtad ciega” apoyada en una determinada identidad personal, social o religiosa, heredada, o bien, como producto de la tradición del grupo étnico-cultural de pertenencia.

Alain Touraine, filósofo francés, levanta una pregunta que inquieta: ¿Podremos vivir juntos? Para ello, tendremos que empezar por aprender a evidenciar hechos, procesos y discursos que precisamente impiden u obstaculizan esa convivencia y replantear la ciudadanía en perspectiva inclusiva e intercultural.

Interacciones Culturales

El desafío, a la par que riqueza de las sociedades contemporáneas, es precisamente la aprender a reconocer y gestionar la diversidad (Wolton, 2003; Ainscow 2011; 2006).

Y en este sentido conviene recordar que, la clave y perspectiva intercultural:

“No concierne sólo a los/as emigrantes y a la pedagogía intercultural, no se refiere, únicamente, a los niños/as. Se trata de una elección de un tipo de sociedad, un proceso difícil, que se inscribe en la perspectiva de un mundo que, para sobrevivir, opta por la interdependencia, en vez de cerrarse en una actitud defensiva” (Consejo de Europa, 1989).

Son muchas y diversas las aproximaciones para abordar las interacciones culturales. Globalmente pueden citarse:

- a. Demográfico-descriptiva
- b. Histórica
- c. Ideológico-normativa
- d. Psicológica
- e. Estructural - modelos de relação (asimilacionista, multicultural, intercultural...)

Presentamos, a grandes rasgos, estos planteamientos, con la idea de que podamos adquirir una mayor conciencia sobre el hecho de que hace tiempo existen estudios profundos, desde las diversas

disciplinas, enfoques y autores sobre la realidad de la diversidad presente en las sociedades actuales. Hoy se profundiza y explora este ámbito, y no es aceptable la ligera improvisación o el desconocimiento, de este tipo de planteamientos y respuestas a la diversidad/diferencias.

a. Demográfico-descriptivo

Este tipo de planteamiento presupone la enumeración exhaustiva o descripción de aquello que es observable y, muchas veces, se puede apoyar en el dato estadístico.

En el caso particular del escenario de las migraciones, podemos hablar de migraciones de carácter interno, y subrayar que se estima que hay aproximadamente 740 millones de migrantes internos y, también de migraciones de carácter externo, que definen la existencia aproximada de 214 millones de migrantes internacionales. Los cuales constituyen cerca de un 3% de la humanidad. Y de estos, cerca de 100 millones son mujeres y un tercio, familias (IOM, ONU).

En 2014 los refugiados y desplazados a nivel mundial casi alcanzaban los 60 millones de personas (ACNUR, 2015).

b. Histórico

Del estudio sobre los flujos migratorios a lo largo de la historia, así como la constitución multicultural de las sociedades, se concluye que no se trata de fenómenos realmente nuevos, ya que siempre existieron dichos flujos así como ciudades multiculturales (Corinto, Roma, Venecia, ...), y generaron encuentros y desencuentros culturales, avances y retrocesos. Pero, tal vez, lo que hoy pueda ser realmente novedoso es el grado, la intensidad y la frecuencia acelerada de estos y la configuración creciente de las sociedades multiculturales. Hay que alertar que no se trata de hechos puramente naturales, detrás de estos también hay decisiones, voluntades políticas, determinados modelos de organización orientados según criterios y objetivos particulares.

c. Normativo

El planteamiento ideológico-normativo, tiene como marco de referencia la preocupación por las interacciones entre las poblaciones diversas de un conjunto de organismos Internacionales, como la UNESCO, la OCDE, el Consejo de Europa, la Unión Europea, etc., o bien, los de carácter regional y local, así como las Iglesias, las órdenes e institutos de vida consagrada, entre otros.

Unos y otros han emitido un conjunto de informes, declaraciones, manifiestos, orientaciones, días internacionales, etc., relativos a los derechos humanos y culturales, la diversidad, la interculturalidad, tolerancia, discriminación y racismo, etc.

Citamos algunos de los documentos y celebraciones más importantes, con el objetivo de evidenciar, más que la actualidad de los documentos, su trayectoria. Es decir, este tipo de temáticas (derechos humanos, diversidad cultural, etc.) ya aparecieron explícitamente desde hace tiempo, a causa de situaciones variadas, que permiten ir consolidando un camino y una conciencia global:

- La Carta de las Naciones Unidas, 1945 (art. 1º.)
- Declaración Universal Derechos Humanos, 1948 (art. 22)
- Año Internacional de la Tolerancia, 1991.
- Carta Europea de las Lenguas minoritarias y regionales (Consejo de Europa)
- Convención para la protección de las minorías, 1994.
- Año Europeo contra el racismo y la xenofobia, 1997.
- Declaración Universal sobre la Diversidad Cultural, 2001,
- Protección y promoción de la diversidad de las Expresiones Culturales (2005, 2007)
- Año Europeo del Diálogo Intercultural y del Proyecto de Ciudades Interculturales (2008).
- Libro Blanco sobre el Diálogo

Intercultural “Vivir Juntos en Igual Dignidad” (Consejo de Europa, 2008).

- Educación Inclusiva, UNESCO (2008)...

Vale la pena recuperar las referencias a temáticas culturales y religiosas, a través de los documentos eclesiales, como por ejemplo, el documento “Diálogo entre las culturas para una civilización del amor y la paz”, de Juan Pablo II, Mensaje para la Jornada Mundial de la Paz (1º Enero 2001); las ideas sobre la inculturación y la evangelización de las culturas, en la Exhortación *Evangelii Gaudium* del Papa Francisco, o bien, un conjunto de documentos de formación, hay Banco de datos interesantes como el de las Salesianas de Don Bosco: “*La obligada vía de la interculturalidad*” (Aquilino Bocos, 2001), “*Un problema attuale per gli Istituti. Interculturalità: ricchezza o minaccia?*” (Tomasi Orielda, 2002), “*L’interculturalità nel mandato missionario dei singoli Istituti: Ricchezza o problematicità?*” (Salvini, GianPaolo, 2002). No podemos dejar de mencionar que incluso las constituciones de algunas congregaciones plantean algunos artículos destinados a la promoción y formación intercultural e interreligiosa, aunque nos sea algo generalizado.

Así pues, la asunción de la cultura y la diversidad hace tiempo que están presentes en el ámbito eclesial y de la vida religiosa acompañados de valiosas experiencias internacionales y de misión, al tiempo que fueron abiertas las puertas a miembros de diferentes orígenes culturales.

d. Psicológico

En este planteamiento se suelen considerar aspectos relacionados con la aculturación, enculturación, adaptación, etc., de la personas a las culturas diferentes, desde una perspectiva psicológica. En este sentido, los estudios de corte constructivista (Ausubel, Bruner, Kolberg, Piaget, Vigotski, entre otros) contribuyeron a la emergencia del área de

la psicología intercultural. Esta área analiza la contribución de las diferentes teorías psicológicas desde la perspectiva del comportamiento humano personal y global. Además integra tres dominios diferenciados, los estudios culturales, comparativos y las tradiciones indígenas. Y temáticas tales como la aculturación, relaciones y comunicación interculturales, sus procesos e interacciones. Algunos de sus autores principales se encuentran Segal, Dasen, Berry e Poortinga (Berry, 2011). También, hoy, es posible referir que existen asociaciones y grupos para la formación y el coaching intercultural.

e. Estructural

Este planteamiento integraría el estudio de los diferentes modelos de investigación relacionados con las variadas perspectivas sobre las interacciones culturales (Muñoz Sedano, 1997; De Vallescar 2003, 2005, 2006^a).

- Asimilacionista: parte de la idea que la diversidad y las diferencias representan una amenaza para la cohesión de sociedad receptora, nacional o de acogida, que es considerada la cultura normativa o y por lo mismo orientadora. De ahí que implementa una política monocultural con el fin de preservar el modelo estandarizado dominante. Esconde conflictos abiertos y encubiertos.

- Integracionista: esta postura afirma la igualdad de derechos para todos los ciudadanos e intenta promover la unidad en la diversidad. Sin embargo, resulta ambigua en su proceder y muchas veces no asume, ni es consecuente con el principio del derecho a las diferencias culturales, ya que termina por someter las minorías a la cultura o grupo hegemónico.

- Pluralismo: entiende y respeta la diferencia considerada como un valor positivo, exigiendo que cada grupo cultural desarrolle y conserve sus propias características, en el seno de la sociedad nacional. Pero las diferencias exigen una gestión adecuada y generan tensión y conflictos, de diverso orden. Este modelo

puede caer en cierto relativismo y la ghetización.

El paso de lo multicultural a lo intercultural implica, como enseguida veremos, una correlación.

- Multicultural, se refiere al hecho social y cultural inevitable, que se presenta en un espacio social que alberga grupos de orígenes étnico-culturales diferentes. Esto implica códigos diferentes a nivel étnico, lingüístico, religioso, nacional, etc. Y la coexistencia en condiciones de asimetría. La preocupación esencial de este modelo será garantizar la libertad e igualdad de todos/as, acompañadas por las exigencias de respeto y tolerancia, y el reconocimiento, entendido como actitud complementaria.

El Diccionario de Inglés de Oxford (2015), define el multiculturalismo: “

The presence of, or support for the presence of, several distinct cultural or ethnic Groups within a society.

- Intercultural: *es una condición precisa para la sociedad multicultural*, aunque representa un avance y una mayor exigencia, pues no sólo reconoce el hecho social, sino que enfatiza (independientemente del gobierno establecido y sus políticas), la intencionalidad de la relación entre las personas portadoras de sus diferencias culturales (ideas, valores, principios...) y trabaja por promover ese encuentro, de forma que cada quién tenga la oportunidad de *contribuir con su aportación particular*. Esto supone apertura, flexibilidad y disposición para entrar en procesos de diálogo; la negociación continua de roles y espacios; el descentramiento, así como el cuestionamiento de las propias visiones ego-céntricas del mundo y las relaciones humanas; el discernimiento de los valores, que entretejen y orientan los procesos de síntesis, de cada sociedad o grupo y sus dinámicas.

En suma, el multiculturalismo se centra en el hecho social y el marco jurídico-político o normativo, mientras que la interculturalidad, parte de esto, pero

subraya la dimensión relacional recíproca y el intercambio de aprendizajes, capaz de modificar y transformar a las personas, permitiendo así la construcción de nuevos espacios de con-vivencia.

El prefijo “inter”, apunta hacia *ese proceso dinámico de interacción entre individuos o grupos, envuelve simultáneamente, representaciones sociales y mentales en el seno del mismo proceso.*

Los diferentes grupos humanos, en su recepción de miembros diferentes, pueden evolucionar con el tiempo, a través de los modelos descritos. Algo que también se aplica a las comunidades o congregaciones religiosas.

El paso de las comunidades multiculturales a comunidades interculturales

Cito una experiencia verídica, que es el reflejo de la concepción, constitución y funcionamiento operativo de alguna congregación y me temo, que es común a varias. Por razones éticas, omito la identidad de los protagonistas y el local.

No hace mucho tiempo fui llamada a un grupo internacional para ayudar a reflexionar sobre la diversidad y su gestión, desde el liderazgo. Mi punto de partida fue intentar sondear los principios de la gestión de la diversidad y su apoyo en la formación intercultural (objetivos, currículo, materiales utilizados, etc.), planificada a lo largo de las diferentes etapas de formación. Como profesora universitaria, se me ocurrió iniciar con la pregunta sobre los programas empleados pues revelarían su visión y puntos de partida. Me quedé sorprendida al saber que no había ninguno (!) Si, repito, no había programa alguno y este grupo tenía un cuerpo de miembros pertenecientes no sólo a diferentes países, sino realidades socioeconómicas, formaciones profesionales y estaba extendido a nivel internacional. La pregunta es: ¿cómo se puede entender esto?

El papel de una formación y asesoría intercultural es fundamental, y una exigencia del momento actual, así como

para poder incidir en los grupos, mentalidades, identidades sociales y culturales, y profundizar en nuestra naturaleza humana física, biológica, psíquica y cultural.

Esta formación permite entender los valores y la identidad desde perspectivas culturales variadas, los puntos sensibles, la mejora y potenciación de las interrelaciones, y por qué no, incluso comprender el papel de la espiritualidad para los diferentes grupos. Porque tanto la experiencia religiosa, como la propia constitución de la vida consagrada y la misma articulación conceptual de las diferentes teologías, están cimentadas en el fenómeno cultural que integra el cruce de varias culturas. No podemos continuar viéndolas y/o tratándolas como modelos únicos, supuestamente neutros y universales o, “desculturizadas”, ya que estos modelos en realidad esconden el dominio y cierre de una cultura, que comúnmente, es la occidental.

Esto significa que necesitamos estrategias e intervenciones de carácter formativo y psicopedagógico, para crear mejores disposiciones personales y de grupo, revisar prácticas y programas, métodos, mayor valorización y reconocimiento de las culturas presentes, trabajar los modelos de comunicación; redefinir la identidad del grupo. Promover auto-estima, bienestar y desarrollo, principalmente de las personas o grupo minoritarios.

En este sentido, abordar la temática de la formación multi-intercultural presupone considerar algunas cuestiones generales y básicas (De Vallescar, 2005^b; 2006^b), apoyados en el derecho a la diferencia y el reconocimiento de la diversidad de las culturas. Al tiempo que, nos exige la construcción de lenguajes comunes y normas específicas para la convivencia, así como establecer las fronteras, opciones y negociaciones continuas.

Punto de partida

Es importante realizar un diagnóstico para discernir la interculturalidad vivida, al interior de las órdenes, congregaciones e institutos, así revisar la sensibilidad, capacidad de apertura y sentido autocrítico para reconocer los respectivos “centrismos” y asimetrías, marginaciones o exclusiones, con el fin de poder superarlos. Esta es una necesidad sentida (y no siempre expresada directamente) por los miembros de muchas congregaciones.

Cuestiones generales

¿A qué se refiere o qué significa, en particular, el tema de la formación multi-intercultural?, es decir:

1. ¿Qué conocimientos, experiencias, prácticas presupone?
2. ¿Hemos aprendido a otras formas de percibir, pensar, sentir, vivir, relacionar y organizar la propia congregación, instituto, orden – organización?
3. ¿Cómo integrar este tipo de formación y que beneficios ofrece?
4. ¿Qué iniciativas interesantes existen?

Necesitamos propiciar momentos para la toma de consciencia sobre la construcción cultural de la propia identidad y las culturas, y situarlas en el contexto e historia de las sociedades y comunidades en que vivimos. Muchas veces vivimos la “ceguera cultural” por la que nos falta la conciencia del grado de determinismo cultural de nuestros comportamientos y prácticas, a nivel individual y de grupo.

Mapeo de la diversidad

Es posible descubrir la diversidad que atraviesa las órdenes, congregaciones o institutos y trazar su perfil, de forma que ayude a visualizar y comprender su realidad concreta y se consiga implementar los recursos adecuados de formación. Esta tarea pasa por cultura organizacional diferente, prácticas inclusivas y colaborativas, guiadas por orientaciones (o políticas) que acompañen el proceso.

En este sentido, proponemos, un par de perspectivas generales:

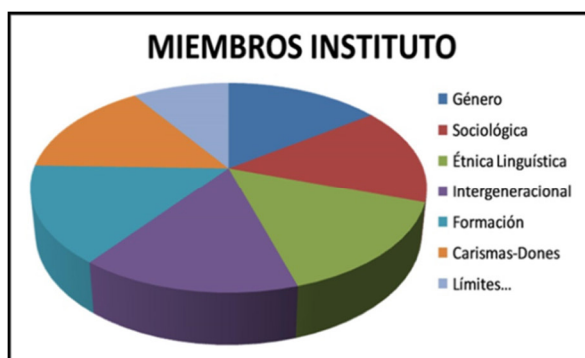
- a) Diversidad situacional de los institutos (o congregaciones)
- b) Diversidad de los miembros de los institutos (o congregaciones).

Enseguida presentamos un par de gráficos, acompañados de un conjunto de preguntas que permitirán explicitar mejor a qué nos estamos refiriendo. Este recurso puede ser aprovechado en los diferentes grupos para reflexionar conjuntamente.

Primero, hay que trabajar en la visualización de la **diversidad situacional** de los institutos, integrada por un conjunto de facetas, como refleja este gráfico.



Segundo, estudiar para comprender la **diversidad de los miembros** que integra el instituto o congregación y así mejorar y potenciar las relaciones.



Para una información pormenorizada de estos aspectos, puede verse mi libro “Tender puentes, Abrir caminos. Multiculturalidad y Vida Consagrada, 2006: 40-45.

A la luz de estos esquemas que reflejan la realidad en perspectiva macro de las órdenes, institutos o congregaciones, conviene preguntarse:

- ¿Se valora el hecho de la multiculturalidad eclesial, social, congregacional como algo positivo y con beneficios indudables para el desarrollo de las personas y los grupos?
- ¿Dónde suele situarse cada miembro y qué áreas privilegia?
- ¿Existe disposición de apertura a formas y expresiones nuevas de espiritualidad, aprovechando los documentos y las voces de miembros de las diversas regiones del mundo? O bien, ¿Se puede afirmar que se alcanzó el aprendizaje necesario para crear espacios para la diferencia y los seres diferentes?
- ¿Qué nos dice la experiencia sobre la constitución y funcionamiento de comunidades que integran miembros pertenecientes a culturas diferentes?
- ¿Quién o quienes experimentan barreras para la participación y que recursos y apoyos se movilizan para volver la comunidad más inclusiva?

- ¿Cómo impulsar una experiencia auténtica en dónde la interculturalidad sea una opción clara e pública, que orienta y dinamiza los procesos de la orden, congregación o instituto?

En una palabra, ¿será que consideramos con seriedad lo que significa el trabajo orientado para una mejora de las relaciones entre personas cuyos contextos de vida originales son diversos y diferentes?

O, todavía se piensa, en el fondo, que esa mejora se da simplemente de forma natural y como resultado de una buena voluntad unida a la espiritualidad de la orden, instituto o congregación.

- ¿Cómo prepararse y entrenarse para ofrecer una formación que contemple la opción intercultural?

Por lo tanto, una formación multi-intercultural, parte de la diversidad de sus miembros como aspecto fundamental, pero trabaja por alcanzar la aceptación real y profunda de esta diversidad. Este planteamiento canaliza el aprendizaje en el sentido de percibir, aceptar y realizar el esfuerzo conjunto de integrar y asumir las contribuciones particulares (De Vallescar,

2006b). Para esto, procura dotar a todos sus miembros, de estrategias y prácticas orientadas que desarrolla y profundiza progresivamente.

Sus objetivos serían:

1. Ayudar a una interacción entre las personas nativas y las inmigrantes, identificando los ámbitos culturales no familiares
2. Suministrar elementos para realizar una interpretación de las relaciones humanas y de ciertos modelos de comportamiento, así como para su comparación y contraste.
3. Modificar determinadas formas de pensar y de comportamiento.
4. Ofrecer determinados conceptos, insights, experiencias y métodos para desarrollar sensibilidad, conciencia y nuevas cualificaciones interculturales.
5. Integrar una componente teórica, práctica y de investigación.
6. Crear nuevos espacios de reciprocidad mutua en las relaciones.

Kit de contenidos eje de la formación multi-intercultural

a) CONCIENCIA SOBRE LA CULTURA, PREJUICIOS Y LAS DIFERENCIAS CULTURALES. Nacemos y somos socializados en una cultura de la cual tenemos poca conciencia.

b) CONOCIMIENTO. Presenta conocimientos factuales e información sobre métodos, poblaciones, problemas para ayudar a integrarse y vivir en una cultura diferente a la propia (protocolos culturales).

c) DESAFÍOS EMOCIONALES. Acompaña en la gestión y la comprensión de las emociones (frustración, ansiedad, confusión, enfado, rabia...).

d) HABILIDADES DE COMPORTAMIENTO (competencias interculturales). Ayuda a desarrollar nuevas competencias para el comportamiento en situación intercultural: como presentarse, escuchar, aprender a observar, ajustarse a nuevas situaciones, cuando pedir disculpas, etc.

A modo de cierre

Para cerrar, pero no concluir, pues es mucho lo que se podría decir sobre la realidad multi-intercultural y la formación en esta perspectiva, hay que subrayar que se trata de una opción que debe ser compartida por toda la organización, instituto o comunidad, en cuanto que valora la riqueza de la diversidad y por eso se esfuerza por reflexionar, aprender, interaccionar, creando un medio adecuado para su vivencia y dinamismo.

Este conjunto de indicadores pueden ayudar a realizar un análisis rápido, de cómo se gestionan la diversidad/diferencias, en perspectiva multi-intercultural.

Indicadores de la interculturalidad

1. MANTENER la cultura hegemónica de una sociedad determinada, grupo o en una relación interpersonal.

2. RECONOCER la existencia de una sociedad multicultural o de culturas diversas presentes en el encuentro (culturas nacionales, culturas étnicas, culturas de género, culturas juveniles, etc.).

3. FOMENTAR la solidaridad y reciprocidad entre las culturas, promoviendo el conocimiento de puntos de vista recíprocos y la aceptación del 'otro/a distinto'.

4. DENUNCIAR la injusticia provocada por la asimetría cultural y luchar contra ella, en todos los niveles.

5. AVANZAR en la dirección de una 'encuentro intercultural' como UN PROCESO OPTADO, PERMANENTE Y SIEMPRE INACABADO, y contra toda forma de discriminación.

Y precisamente, dicha opción intercultural no puede ser impuesta desde arriba o por una cultura dominante, porque es resultado de un camino y proceso, orientado en toda su dinámica y finalidad última en dirección intercultural.

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Riflessione teologica sull'interculturalità

1. Attualità del Dialogo Interreligioso

A nessuno sfugge oggi l'importanza che ha il dialogo interculturale e interreligioso. Uno dei segni più chiari dell'importanza acquisita dal dialogo interreligioso e interculturale nel nostro tempo è l'interesse con cui gli organismi internazionali, come l'ONU, l'UNESCO o il Consiglio d'Europa, tradizionalmente restii a prendere in considerazione il fatto religioso, si dedicano allo studio di tale problematica. Nel sistema Nazioni Unite, la denominazione "Dialogo interculturale e interreligioso" è divenuta un'espressione ricorrente. L'UNESCO che fin dalla sua fondazione accoglie in seno correnti con grandi pregiudizi verso la religione, ha creato, all'interno della sezione delle politiche interculturali e del dialogo interculturale, un settore che si occupa del "dialogo interreligioso", che organizza forum, dibattiti e incontri su questo tema¹. Il Consiglio d'Europa, dal canto suo, sta preparando un libro bianco sul dialogo interreligioso, destinato agli Stati membri con suggerimenti per avviare il dialogo interreligioso. Si può dire che la questione religiosa, o più esattamente il dialogo tra le religioni sia passato, in pochissimo tempo, da una situazione di oblio a godere della massima attenzione da parte delle autorità. E così, oggi, il rischio non è tanto che i Governi ignorino il fatto religioso, quanto che vogliano gestire e pilotare tale dialogo che, come ben dice il nome, deve essere portato avanti dagli stessi credenti e non già dai Governi.



Melchor Sanchez de Toca

Non è difficile accorgersi che gli attentati dell'11 settembre a New York e la loro triste sequela a Madrid, Bombay, Londra, Parigi, Bruxelles, e tanti altri luoghi, così come la guerra in Siria e in Iraq, la situazione in Medio Oriente, hanno avuto una parte importante suscitando nuovo interesse per il fenomeno religioso, o meglio, per certe sue patologie e per la ricerca frenetica di una intesa tra le religioni. Questi avvenimenti sembrano dar ragione a coloro che sostengono la

teoria dello scontro delle civiltà, avanzata da Samuel Huntington nel suo celebre saggio dal titolo omonimo². Come è noto, la teoria di Huntington è che, finite la guerra fredda e le ideologie che la fomentavano, la cultura e le civiltà si trasformano in un nuovo elemento capace di plasmare identità collettive e, di conseguenza, diventano un fattore di destabilizzazione nel mondo. In questo scontro di civiltà, la religione appare come un elemento fondamentale.

Richard Dawkins, per citare un testo facilmente reperibile su internet, afferma che, sebbene l'umanità sia capace di commettere cose brutte, per arrivare alle efferatezze ci vuole la religione. «Molti di noi vedevano la religione come una sciocchezza inoffensiva. L'11 settembre ha cambiato tutto. La fede rivelata non è una sciocchezza inoffensiva, può diventare una stupidità letalmente pericolosa». E Christopher Hitchens aggiungeva che la sorgente

¹ Si veda il portale dell'Unesco www.unesco.org

² S. Huntington, Lo scontro delle civiltà, Garzanti, Milano 2000.

principale dell'odio nel mondo è la religione. Nel caso concreto dei rapporti problematici tra il mondo islamico e quello occidentale, lo stesso Huntington sostiene che il vero problema tra questi due mondi sia la differenza religiosa. Tuttavia, si mostra fiducioso, poiché, afferma, tra le due comunità c'è stato per secoli un *modus vivendi*³. Altri studiosi si mostrano ancor più pessimisti davanti al futuro, e invece di prevedere uno scontro di civiltà, azzardano l'islamizzazione inevitabile di un'Europa che non vuole difendere i suoi propri valori. Oriana Fallaci e Daniel Pipes, tra gli altri, hanno coniato il termine *Eurabia* per riferirsi a ciò che prevedono sarà l'Europa in un prossimo futuro. Perfino l'India, paese noto per la sua tradizione di tolleranza religiosa, dove convivono pacificamente credenti di diverse religioni, ha visto aumentare ultimamente gli episodi di fondamentalismo religioso.

Al di fuori della geopolitica, l'importanza del dialogo religioso si riscopre anche nel campo della teologia. Negli ultimi anni si è fatta strada la disciplina conosciuta come teologia delle religioni, la quale si interroga circa il valore salvifico di queste ultime. Nella nuova situazione di pluralismo religioso in cui viviamo diventa inevitabile interrogarsi sul valore che hanno le diverse religioni e si è obbligati a riformulare il senso e le modalità dell'azione evangelizzatrice della Chiesa. La categoria del dialogo appare come un elemento principale della suddetta teologia. Ma non mancano i problemi.

Per esempio, è molto diffusa l'opinione che, attraverso tutte le religioni, si possa giungere ugualmente alla salvezza. Questa visione non corrisponde soltanto ad un'idea di rispetto per l'altro che oggi si impone, ma anche ad una certa immagine di Dio: poiché – si pensa – sarebbe impossibile conoscere la verità, dovremmo accontentarci delle approssimazioni che offrono le religioni, che sarebbero tutte più o meno equivalenti. Ma così si finirebbe,

quasi fatalmente, nella trappola del relativismo: quando tutto ha lo stesso valore, nulla vale nulla; e si arriverebbe alla paradossale conclusione che un ateo o un non credente si verrebbe a trovare, paradossalmente, in una situazione più vantaggiosa rispetto al cristiano al quale si chiede la testimonianza di vita e una morale più elevata. Saremmo allora, realmente, «da compiangere più di tutti gli uomini» (1 Cor 15) e la nostra fede sarebbe vana!

La chiave del problema è che non si può disgiungere il discorso della religione da quello della verità. Ma questa parola è diventata un linguaggio duro ai nostri orecchi. Ratzinger, in un saggio importante, lo formulava così: se tutte le religioni si equivalgono, se è impossibile decidere quale sia la vera religione, se, in definitiva, eliminiamo il problema della verità dalla questione religiosa, se «la verità viene sostenuta dalla buona intenzione, la religione rimane nell'ambito soggettivo, perché quanto è oggettivamente buono e vero non si può riconoscere»⁴. La conseguenza è chiara: se eliminiamo il problema della verità allora risulta impossibile ogni forma di dialogo autentico, la missione si svuoterebbe di senso e l'uomo si chiuderebbe nella banalità di una vita senza orizzonti. In questa prospettiva, non è superfluo ricordare il monito di von Balthasar che, nel suo saggio *Cordula ovvero il caso serio*⁵, temeva la fine del martirio nel nostro tempo. Il martire muore per la verità, ma se non c'è più una verità, per quale motivo farsi ammazzare per qualcosa di cui non si è sicuri? E se sparissero i martiri, i testimoni, la Chiesa perderebbe la sua vitalità.

Il panorama descritto può sembrare cupo e non senza buone ragioni. Tuttavia, faremmo un torto alla verità, se ci limitassimo ad additare i pericoli e le

³ ENNIO CARRETTO, «Eurabia», *Corriere Della Sera*, 21 aprile 2007, pag. 45.

⁴ J. RATZINGER, «Verità del cristianesimo?», FVT, 214.

⁵ H.-U. VON BALTHASAR, *Cordula ovvero il caso serio*, in *Scritti Minori*, Jaca Book, Milano.

minacce che incombono sul nostro tempo, trasformandoci in quei profeti di sciagure contro i quali metteva in guardia Giovanni XXIII. Blondel ci insegna che il cristiano non è *contro* gli altri, sebbene sia *totalmente* altro. Un testimone eminente del dialogo interreligioso, figlio di San Francesco, il Padre Jean-Mohammed Abdel-Jalil, era solito ripetere a tal proposito le parole di Gesù: «Il Figlio dell'uomo non è venuto a condannare, ma a salvare»⁶. È tipico del cristiano cercare la luce là dove si trova: la fiamma incerta che non si spegne e la canna incrinata che non si spezza. La realtà del Regno dei Cieli appare sempre minacciata e insignificante, come il granello di senape. Però possiede una forza incredibile.

2. Logos: verità e ragione

Come uscire da questo impasse? Credo che chi più di altri abbia riflettuto sulla problematica e offerto soluzioni possibili sia stato Benedetto XVI-Joseph Ratzinger, che prenderemo come guida per questa nostra passeggiata. Tutta la teologia di Ratzinger è imperniata sulla centralità del concetto di *Logos*: il logos ragione, parola, pensiero, che ci permette di capire il mondo e di esprimerlo in parole. Anzitutto, due affermazioni fondamentali:

In primo luogo, ricordiamo che il cristianesimo è la religione del *Logos*, vale a dire della ragione. Certamente, è anche la religione dell'amore, che è il concetto centrale del messaggio di Gesù. Ma per adesso, prendiamo il logos: « Il cristianesimo deve ricordarsi sempre che è la religione del logos. Esso è fede nel *Creator Spiritus*, nello Spirito creatore, dal quale proviene tutto il reale. E proprio questa è la sua forza filosofica, in quanto il problema è se il mondo provenga dall'irrazionale, e la ragione non sia dunque altro che un "sottoprodotto", magari pure dannoso, del suo sviluppo, o se il mondo provenga dalla

ragione, ed essa sia di conseguenza il suo criterio e la sua meta»⁷.

In secondo luogo, in intimo rapporto con quanto detto sopra: la vera opzione fondamentale dell'uomo, in ultima istanza, è la scelta tra la ragione e l'irrazionalità ossia sapere se il mondo procede dalla pura materia irrazionale, in tal caso la ragione non è altro che un mero sottoprodotto, forse dannoso, dell'evoluzione cieca della materia, o se, invece, all'origine del mondo c'è un disegno intelligente, una ragione e se questa è, in tal caso, la sua guida e la sua meta⁸. Questa è, per il Papa, l'alternativa ultima, alla quale è difficile sfuggire: è necessario scegliere, con tutte le sue conseguenze, tra ragione e irrazionalità. Accettare un mondo che si è fatto da solo, che è puro prodotto del caso, porta, quindi, ad ipotizzare che la ragione è, in fondo, totalmente irrazionale, frutto della casualità. Il mondo e l'uomo sono così, ma potrebbero essere altrimenti. Le leggi della logica e della matematica, fonte continua di stupore e meraviglia, non sarebbero altro che pure e semplici convenzioni. Il che, portato alle sue estreme conseguenze, implica la negazione della libertà: se il divenire del cosmo è governato dal binomio , che dà il titolo alla famosa opera di Monod , caso e necessità, la libertà umana non è altro che una chimera e un sogno. La materia non avrebbe prodotto la coscienza e le nostre libere decisioni sarebbero in realtà un'illusione: saremmo determinati come lo è un computer programmato per realizzare determinate funzioni.

Nell'alternativa tra ragione e irrazionalità, il cristianesimo si presenta, dunque, come la religione del *Logos*, aprendo all'uomo un nuovo cammino:

Modificando il primo versetto del Libro della Genesi, il primo versetto dell'intera Sacra Scrittura, Giovanni ha iniziato il prologo del suo Vangelo con le parole: "In

⁶ Jean-MOHAMMAD Abd-EL-JALIL, *Testimone di Cristo e del Vangelo*, Jaca Book, Milano.

⁷ J. RATZINGER, «L'Europa nella crisi delle culture», Discorso in Subiaco, 1 aprile 2005.

⁸ J. RATZINGER, «Verità del cristianesimo», FVT 190.

principio era il λόγος". ... *Logos* significa insieme ragione e parola – una ragione che è creatrice e capace di comunicarsi ma, appunto, come ragione. Giovanni con ciò ci ha donato la parola conclusiva sul concetto biblico di Dio, la parola in cui tutte le vie spesso faticose e tortuose della fede biblica raggiungono la loro meta, trovano la loro sintesi. In principio era il *logos*, e il *logos* è Dio, ci dice l'evangelista⁹.

In effetti, «soltanto la ragione creatrice, e che nel Dio crocifisso si è manifestata come amore, può veramente mostrarci la via»¹⁰. Questa scommessa lanciata alla ragione umana e alla sua capacità di conoscere la verità si è vista progressivamente ridursi con l'inizio della modernità. Nell'analisi del cardinale Ratzinger, il restringimento dei limiti della ragione moderna ha a che vedere con lo sviluppo della scienza, che consiste nella sintesi tra formulazione matematica e sperimentazione. L'idealismo – in fondo una forma di platonismo – e l'empirismo, le due varianti del pensiero moderno, confluiscono nella formazione della scienza contemporanea che ha conosciuto un successo senza precedenti negli ultimi 300 anni. La contropartita è che, con questo tipo di razionalità, si ammette come conoscenza valida solo quella che la scienza può dimostrare con certezza. Ma con ciò, le grandi questioni dell'esistenza dell'uomo, i problemi dell'etica e dell'estetica, la metafisica e, soprattutto, il problema di Dio non sono presi neppure in considerazione, in quanto sono pre- o a-scientifici¹¹.

Questa limitazione della ragione contemporanea sul piano etico dà luogo, come conseguenza, al soggettivismo della coscienza. Malgrado i tentativi di Kant di mantenere una morale universale dopo

aver liquidato la metafisica, se l'unica conoscenza razionale è solo di tipo scientifico, la morale resta relegata all'ambito puramente soggettivo. Dato che non c'è altra conoscenza razionale se non quella scientifica e le domande riguardo all'etica rimangono al di fuori di essa, non è possibile parlare di norme morali universalmente conoscibili. Allora «Il soggetto decide, in base alle sue esperienze, che cosa gli appare religiosamente sostenibile, e la "coscienza" soggettiva diventa in definitiva l'unica istanza etica»¹².

La conseguenza è chiara: in questo modo, l'*ethos* e la religione perdono il loro potere di creare una comunità e diventano una faccenda del tutto personale. Da qui alla dittatura del relativismo il passo è breve. Dinanzi all'impossibilità di stabilire norme comuni, valevoli per tutti, l'unico criterio che resta per determinare ciò che è bene e ciò che è male è l'uso della forza, sia dei voti, sia delle armi e della coercizione. «Dittatura del relativismo» è un'espressione coniata dal Cardinale Ratzinger nell'omelia della messa di apertura del conclave dal quale uscì eletto Papa, un'espressione che ha avuto fortuna e che ben riassume la grande sfida che si presenta alla Chiesa: «Si va costituendo una dittatura del relativismo che non riconosce nulla come definitivo e che lascia come ultima misura solo il proprio io e le sue voglie»¹³. Comunque, a partire da questi presupposti è impossibile costruire o mantenere la vita sociale.

Per concludere, possiamo affermare che riprendere in considerazione il problema della verità e la possibilità di conoscerla costituisce, tutto sommato, la questione più importante. Se all'orizzonte non si ha la verità, è impossibile parlare di cultura.

⁹ BENEDETTO XVI, *Discorso* all'Università di Ratisbona, 12 settembre 2006.

¹⁰ J. RATZINGER, «L'Europa nella crisi delle culture», Subiaco, 1 aprile 2005.

¹¹ BENEDETTO XVI, *Discorso* all'Università di Ratisbona, 12 settembre 2006.

¹² BENEDETTO XVI, *Discorso* all'Università di Ratisbona, 12 settembre 2006.

¹³ J. RATZINGER, Omelia nella Messa pro eligendo Pontefice, 18 aprile 2005.

3. La fondamentale apertura della cultura

Dopo questa introduzione, possiamo passare ad esaminare il concetto di cultura. Il concetto di cultura è uno dei più insidiosi che esistano. È proverbiale a questo punto, citare le 250 definizioni di cultura raccolte da Kroeber e Kluckhohn, nel loro saggio del 1952 *A Critical Review of the Concept of Culture*. Ma possiamo provvisoriamente usare una definizione provvisoria utilizzata da Papa Francesco nella sua esortazione *Evangelii Gaudium*

La nozione di cultura è uno strumento prezioso per comprendere le diverse espressioni della vita cristiana presenti nel Popolo di Dio. Si tratta dello stile di vita di una determinata società, del modo peculiare che hanno i suoi membri di relazionarsi tra loro, con le altre creature e con Dio. Intesa così, la cultura comprende la totalità della vita di un popolo. [...] Ogni popolo, nel suo divenire storico, sviluppa la propria cultura con legittima autonomia. Ciò si deve al fatto che la persona umana, «di natura sua ha assolutamente bisogno d'una vita sociale» ed è sempre riferita alla società, dove vive un modo concreto di rapportarsi alla realtà. L'essere umano è sempre culturalmente situato: «natura e cultura sono quanto mai strettamente connesse». *Evangelii Gaudium*, 115.

Abbiamo qui diversi elementi caratteristici: da una parte, l'elemento conoscitivo, ma orientato alla prassi, ossia i grandi interrogativi che permettono di orientare e dare senso all'esistenza dell'uomo. Inoltre, in tutte le grandi culture il compito di dare senso globalmente all'esistenza – ciò che nel dibattito attuale sono chiamati i grandi racconti –, non è da affrontare individualmente, ma sempre nella comunità.

La cosa importante è che tutte le culture sono, per loro natura, aperte a una doppia trascendenza: da una parte, esiste un dinamismo di superamento del visibile che spinge ad andare oltre. Perciò, la parte più intima di ogni cultura è costituita dal suo avvicinamento al mistero di Dio e dell'

uomo. Infatti, tutte le culture dell'umanità, ad eccezione forse della moderna cultura occidentale, sono essenzialmente religiose nel loro nucleo più intimo. Ma esiste anche, nell'interazione costante cui le culture si vedono soggette, un'apertura le une alle altre. Sin dagli albori dell'umanità, le culture sono state sottoposte a un processo costante di scambio, di arricchimento, di prestiti. Perciò, mi sembra che voler preservare la purezza di una cultura, isolandola dalle restanti, conduce la stessa cultura alla morte per asfissia. In definitiva, possiamo dire che la dimensione trascendente è propria della cultura: apertura al mistero, al divino, e apertura alle altre culture in una costante interazione nel corso della storia.

Queste due dimensioni rappresentano un dato di fatto. Orbene, quando si chiede perché le cose stanno così, è inevitabile ricorrere alla dimensione più profonda dell'uomo: «L'incontro delle culture è possibile perché l'uomo, nonostante tutte le differenze della sua storia e delle sue creazioni è un identico e unico essere»¹⁴. La comune natura umana è ciò che consente il dialogo tra le culture. Il fatto che le nostre anime siano toccate dalla verità spiega l'apertura fondamentale dell'individuo e delle culture all'altro. Ricapitolando, allora, per Ratzinger:

Il mezzo che le porta [le culture] l'una incontro all'altra non può che essere la comune verità sull'uomo, nella quale è sempre in gioco la verità su Dio e sulla realtà nel suo complesso. Quanto più una cultura è conforme alla natura umana, quanto più è elevata, tanto più aspirerà alla verità che fino a un certo punto le era rimasta preclusa, sarà capace di assimilare tale verità e d'immedesimarsi con essa¹⁵.

Alla luce di tale concezione della cultura, è necessario domandarsi che tipo di relazione si instaura tra la fede cristiana e la cultura.

¹⁴ J. RATZINGER, «Fede, religione, cultura», FVT 67.

¹⁵ J. RATZINGER, «Fede, religione, cultura», FVT 69.

4. L'incontro tra la fede e la cultura

L'idea principale per spiegare il rapporto tra la fede e la cultura è la constatazione di un paradosso: la fede si presenta sempre sotto una forma culturale, e al tempo stesso la supera infinitamente –verrebbe da dire con Pascal, *l'homme dépasse infiniment l'homme*. Da una parte, la fede –ossia i contenuti della fede, ma anche l'atto di fede – non si dà mai come quintessenza, astratta, come un'essenza pura e disincarnata da innestare poi in diversi soggetti culturali; la rivelazione di Dio si manifesta sempre attraverso categorie culturali e temporali determinate. Il portatore di questa rivelazione è un soggetto culturale: «una comunità di vita e di cultura che chiamiamo “popolo di Dio”», che possiede una cultura peculiare. Ma attenzione: questa cultura non è come le altre culture:

La Bibbia non è semplicemente espressione della cultura del popolo di Israele, ma si trova costantemente in conflitto con la tendenza, del tutto naturale, di questo popolo ad essere semplicemente se stesso, a “domiciliarsi” nella sua propria cultura. La fede in Dio ed il “sì” alla volontà di Dio gli viene costantemente strappato contro le sue proprie concezioni e desideri. ... La fede di Israele significa un auto superamento della propria cultura per aprirsi ed entrare nella vastità della verità comune a tutti¹⁶.

Nella storia di Israele c'è una tendenza permanente a crearsi una propria cultura nazionale, come quella degli altri popoli, una tendenza denunciata continuamente dai profeti per impedire questa chiusura e aprirla all'universale. La storia di Israele comincia precisamente con la partenza di Abramo dalla sua casa paterna e dalla sua terra, vale a dire dalla sua propria cultura, per aprirsi ad una nuova cultura. La fede cristiana è, quindi, per sua natura un continuo aprirsi, irruzione di Dio nel mondo degli uomini e apertura dell'uomo in risposta a Dio. Questa concezione di una

fede che si dà necessariamente incarnata ci costringe a parlare necessariamente dell'inculturazione. Nell'esortazione *Evangelii Gaudium*, Papa Francesco ci ricorda l'importanza di questa diversità culturale:

- In modo che, come possiamo vedere nella storia della Chiesa, il cristianesimo non dispone di un unico modello culturale, bensì, «restando pienamente se stesso, nella totale fedeltà all'annuncio evangelico e alla tradizione ecclesiale, esso porterà anche il volto delle tante culture e dei tanti popoli in cui è accolto e radicato».

- Papa Francesco parla di un “volto pluriforme” della Chiesa, come la sposa ornata *monilibus suis*, diverse forme di cristianesimo. E citando dichiarazioni dei vescovi dell'Oceania, ricorda ancora:

“Non possiamo pretendere che tutti i popoli di tutti i continenti, nell'esprimere la fede cristiana, imitino le modalità adottate dai popoli europei in un determinato momento della storia, perché la fede non può chiudersi dentro i confini della comprensione e dell'espressione di una cultura particolare. È indiscutibile che una sola cultura non esaurisce il mistero della redenzione di Cristo.” (*Ev. Gaudii*, n. 118).

Questo ideale, se ben inteso, non dovrebbe minacciare l'unità della Chiesa, perché lo stesso spirito santo autore della diversità, spinge sempre verso l'unità della fede e la comunione degli affetti.

Ma anche se l'ideale di un cristianesimo inculturato in diverse culture è un'esigenza, non è senza difficoltà. Vi è innanzitutto un determinato concetto di inculturazione, molto diffuso, presentato spesso come se fosse una semplice operazione chirurgica di rimozione degli elementi della cultura occidentale, che si sarebbero aggiunti al Vangelo, per innestare poi questa fede, spogliata di aderenze culturali accessorie, in una cultura diversa, privata in precedenza del proprio intimo nucleo religioso. Il problema è che tale tipo di operazione di ingegneria pastorale, paragonabile a ciò che in biologia si chiama trasferimento di

¹⁶ J. RATZINGER, «Fides et ratio», FVT, 209-210.

nucleo, si basa su un falso presupposto: in realtà, non esiste una fede senza cultura e, fuori della moderna civiltà tecnologica, non esiste una cultura che non sia, nella sua più intima essenza, profondamente religiosa. Io credo che la soluzione vada cercata invece affermando la potenziale universalità di tutte le culture e la loro reciproca apertura¹⁷.

Io credo che bisogna ricordare che ciò che noi chiamiamo inculturazione è in realtà un processo salvifico, qualcosa di più di una pura e semplice strategia di mercato, per adattare qua e là la liturgia e il linguaggio. Inculturazione« «significa l'intima trasformazione degli autentici valori culturali mediante l'integrazione nel cristianesimo e il radicamento del cristianesimo nelle varie culture»¹⁸. A tal proposito, nell'Enciclica *Fides et ratio* il Papa ricorda che «quando la Chiesa entra in contatto con grandi culture precedentemente non ancora raggiunte, non può lasciarsi alle spalle ciò che ha acquisito dall'inculturazione nel pensiero greco-latino. Rifiutare una simile eredità sarebbe andare contro il disegno provvidenziale di Dio, che conduce la sua Chiesa lungo le strade del tempo e della storia» (*ibidem*). E infine, ricorda Giovanni Paolo II, occorre evitare di confondere la legittima rivendicazione di ciò che è specifico ed originale nel pensiero proprio di una cultura, con l'idea secondo cui una tradizione culturale deve chiudersi nella sua diversità e affermarsi nella sua opposizione ad altre tradizioni, il che è contrario alla stessa natura dello spirito umano (*ibidem*).

L'inculturazione è così il dialogo che la Chiesa, Popolo di Dio nella storia, realizza con le varie culture del suo ambiente, arricchendosi di nuovi aspetti in ogni passo successivo. E in quanto aperti alla verità, si trasformano in aspetti permanenti. Perciò, come oggi la Chiesa non può rinunciare all'eredità culturale del mondo greco, così

in avvenire, essa, «arricchita dalle acquisizioni realizzate nell'odierno approccio con le culture orientali ... troverà in questa eredità nuove indicazioni per entrare fruttuosamente in dialogo con quelle culture che l'umanità saprà far fiorire nel suo cammino incontro al futuro» (*Fides et ratio*, 72).

5. Alcune proposte

Abbiamo parlato finora di grandi considerazioni teologiche sull'essenza della cultura e sulla possibilità di un dialogo tra le culture. Fatte queste considerazioni, dobbiamo tornare sull'aspetto pratico. Come portare alla pratica un vero dialogo interculturale, in un contesto globale dove persone di culture diverse convivono quotidianamente? Come dicevamo prima, il vero dialogo interreligioso e interculturale va al di là delle manifestazioni esterne e delle inevitabili contaminazioni o fecondazioni reciproche —come è avvenuto sin dall'origine dei tempi—per affrontare insieme le grandi questioni dell'esistenza, davanti alle quali tutti ci troviamo insieme.

Credo che un punto di partenza interessante possa essere la nozione di “ricerca”. Come è ben saputo, sant'Agostino ha definito il cristiano come un cercatore di Dio. Dio è un *Deus semper quaerendus*, un Dio che viene cercato per essere incontrato, e che una volta trovato continua ad essere oggetto di ricerca: «*Nam et quaeritur ut inveniatur dulcius, et invenitur ut quaeratur avidius*» (*De Trinitate*, XV, 2,2). Ed è sempre sant'Agostino che ricorda altrove: «*fides, si non cogitatur, nulla est*», una Fede che non sia alla ricerca permanente non è niente. Erri de Luca ha ricordato che “credente” è un participio presente, e che i credenti dovrebbero tenerlo a mente: si sta sempre credendo.

Questo ovviamente non significa che la fede non sia in grado di offrire certezze su cui costruire la vita. È solo che sappiamo che Dio è *semper maior*. Sant'Atanasio ricordava: *se comprehendis, non est Deus* e

¹⁷ Cfr. *Ibidem*

¹⁸ GIOVANNI PAOLO II, Enc. *Redemptoris Missio*, 52.

Musil, da parte sua, non è meno contundente quando ne *L'uomo senza qualità* fa dire a un suo personaggio che la verità non è come una pietra preziosa che si mette in tasca, la verità è come un male in cui ci si sommerge e si naviga. Credo, pertanto, che bisognerebbe proporre a tutti la cultura come ricerca di senso ultimo, e di non accontentarsi di risultati mediocri.

Ma vorrei ricordare anche tre elementi universali, tre linguaggi che accomunano gli uomini, e che potrebbero essere degli efficaci deterrenti contro la patologia del radicalismo.

Il primo linguaggio universale è quello della scienza e della matematica. È un vero linguaggio che unisce le persone tramite la formalizzazione simbolica e l'astrazione. Il nostro mondo è testimone di imprese scientifiche compiute da ricercatori appartenenti a paesi e culture diverse, che riescono a comunicare grazie al linguaggio scientifico. In questo senso, la scienza può unire i popoli, a condizione di non ergersi a pseudo-religione, istanza ultima e definitiva di giudizio su tutto.

Il secondo linguaggio universale, vero esperanto dell'umanità è il gioco e lo sport. Dai un pallone a un gruppo di bambini e si metteranno a giocare tra di loro, anche se non si conoscono. Il gioco e lo sport possono essere un efficace strumento educativo e di integrazione sociale, come hanno capito tutti i grandi educatori. Don Pino Puglisi intuì il valore del calcio come educazione alla legalità e per evitare che i ragazzi del suo quartiere cadessero nelle grinfie delle mafie. Nelson Mandela, da parte sua, vide nel rugby il modo di dare coesione a una nazione lacerata da anni di un regime iniquo di separazione. Naturalmente, il gioco e lo sport non sono esenti da minacce e pericoli. Basterebbe qui ricordare che la parola tifo, all'origine, significa febbre, e in molti casi, tristemente è febbre violenta. Le confessioni religiose possono offrire a uno sport incapace di riscattarsi da solo il contributo di un'iniezione di etica e di valori. E a sua volta, lo sport può aiutare i credenti a

crescere integralmente, e a creare comunità più sane e coese.

Infine menzionerei la musica, e più genericamente, l'espressione artistica. Anche qui tutti noi siamo testimoni del potere che ha la musica di unire le persone in un ascolto, la capacità che ha la musica di arricchirsi di suoni e di tonalità diverse, di integrare e crescere. La stessa composizione sinfonica è già un esempio di unità nella diversità. Due perfetti sconosciuti, incapaci di comunicarsi con le parole, sono invece capaci di suonare e di creare musica insieme. Come diceva Elie Wiesel, ricordando la scena della visione di Giacobbe a Betel, «la musica è la scala di Giacobbe che gli angeli hanno dimenticato sulla terra». È grazie ad essa che possiamo ancora avere qualche barlume di ciò che è il cielo sulla terra.

Conclusione

La possibilità di un dialogo vero tra le culture e le persone si fonda nella comune ricerca della verità e dell'assoluto. Ma parlare di verità non risulta facile. L'esperienza storica insegna che troppo spesso la verità è stata manipolata dal potere che se ne serviva per imporre una dittatura. Nella mente di molti, la verità si associa al potere e, di conseguenza, alla corruzione e alla menzogna. Viene spontaneo ricordare il giornale sovietico *Pravda*, che in russo vuol dire Verità, e che ogni giorno somministrava a un popolo tiranneggiato una buona dose di bugie.

Per molti c'è una netta contrapposizione tra le esigenze della verità, che sono fredde, astratte e inumane, espresse nella legge morale oggettiva, e quelle dell'amore che tiene conto della persona concreta nella sua umanità.

Tuttavia, tale dialettica tra verità e amore non è altro che una delle false contrapposizioni del nostro tempo, come tra libertà e obbedienza alla verità, sentimento e ragione. A causa della miopia e della frammentazione della nostra cultura, di frequente si presenta l'amore come incompatibile con la verità.

Ambedue, però, hanno bisogno l'uno dell'altra. Giovanni Paolo II lo ricordava in un bellissimo passo dell'omelia in occasione della canonizzazione di Edith Stein. Rivolgendosi ai giovani, il Papa rammentava il vincolo che unisce intimamente verità e amore.

Nel nostro tempo la verità viene scambiata spesso con l'opinione della maggioranza. Inoltre è diffusa la convinzione che ci si debba servire della verità anche contro l'amore o viceversa. Ma la verità e l'amore hanno bisogno l'una dell'altro. Suor Teresa Benedetta ne è testimone. La "martire per amore", che donò la sua vita per gli amici, non si fece superare da nessuno nell'amore. Allo stesso tempo ella cercò con tutta se stessa la verità... Suor Teresa Benedetta della Croce dice a noi tutti: Non accettate nulla come verità che sia privo di amore. E non accettate nulla come amore che sia privo di verità! L'uno senza l'altra diventa una menzogna distruttiva¹⁹.

La verità senza amore diventa una dittatura insopportabile. L'amore senza la verità si trasforma in una tirannia ingannevole. Non si può optare per l'amore contro la verità. E neppure si può ricorrere alla verità ignorando l'amore. Isolati l'uno dall'altra, imboccano una strada che conduce allo smarrimento e alla distruzione. Così, osservava Chesterton, alcuni scienziati si occupano della verità, però la loro verità è senza misericordia; e alcuni filantropi si occupano solo di carità, però quest'ultima è falsa²⁰. Entrambe le realtà esigono una risposta armoniosa e coerente da parte dell'uomo.

Infatti, ambedue, verità e carità, rimandano, alla fin fine, ad una persona, cioè a Gesù Cristo. San Paolo ne offre la chiave nel quarto capitolo della lettera agli Efesini, quando propone come programma «realizzare la verità nella carità» come formula fondamentale dell'esistenza

cristiana. In Cristo si incontrano la verità e la carità. A mano a mano che ci avviciniamo a Cristo, anche nella nostra vita, la verità e la carità si fondono. «La carità senza la verità sarebbe cieca; la verità senza la carità sarebbe come "un cembalo che tintinna"» (1 Cor 13, 1)²¹.

La verità stessa si è fatta sopportabile all'uomo perché si è rivestita di impotenza. Quando si è manifestata agli uomini, non l'ha fatto nella teofania del Sinai, quando il popolo di Israele supplicò Mosè affinché il Signore non parlasse loro per non morire, ma nell'umiltà di un bimbo appena nato avvolto in fasce, nella nudità di un giustiziato, appeso in modo infame al legno della croce. Colui che ha detto di sé stesso «Io sono la verità», non si è identificato con il ricco Epulone, ma con il povero Lazzaro. Sì, Cristo è la verità, però una verità fragile ed esposta, che riparte sempre. È il granello di senape, il chicco di grano che cade e muore. È la canna incrinata e la fiamma incerta, sempre minacciate. «L'umiltà di Dio è la porta della verità nel mondo, non ce n'è un'altra. Nella controversia sulla vera fede e sul vero cammino, la comunione nella croce è il criterio ultimo e decisivo»²².

Verità e amore, che trovano la loro unità piena e perfetta in Cristo, si trasformano nei due principi guida della cultura, la fucina ove si forgia, nel cuore della persona, la passione per la verità e l'amore senza frontiere.

¹⁹ GIOVANNI PAOLO II, *Omelia* nella canonizzazione di Edith Stein, 11-10-1998.

²⁰ G. K. CHESTERTON, *Orthodoxy*, Ignatius Press, San Francisco, 1995, 35.

²¹ J. RATZINGER, *Omelia* nella Messa pro eligendo Pontefice, 18 aprile 2005.

²² J. RATZINGER, *Cantate al signore un canto nuovo*, Jaca Book, Milano 1996, 35.

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Intercultural Competence for Religious Communities: Models, Gauges and Guides

Introduction

At one time, the world's peoples and tribes were separated by rivers, mountains, forests and seas. These natural barriers have now been bridged by our advanced technologies and media. Today, we live in a global, multicultural environment and peoples of vastly different cultures are thrown together in every day interaction. This overwhelming experience of difference often leaves confusion and conflict in its wake. Our history and cultural socialization process not only do not prepare us for this, they actively inhibit an adequate response.

Problems with difference also affect religious communities. Quite paradoxically, in fact, for they are meant to be models of harmony. Religious communities are no longer "one body" united harmoniously as monocultural "cities of God" in the body of Christ. Composed of people from different cultures from around the world, they are often more diverse and disjoined than the larger fabric of human society which they serve. Some are able to adjust to the differences—though most are not—and many others are oblivious. They are multicultural, living on mutually isolated parallel tracks. Many are beginning to ask questions like: How can we take on the challenges of our time? Learn more about our differences? Live together harmoniously? Where are the models to guide us? How would our

founding generation deal with this? How would Christ respond?

The right questions frame the right answers. A more informed set of questions would be: How can religious communities move from living together multiculturally to interculturally, or in ways that respect human dignity and difference? How can we better understand our reactions, moti-

ves, strengths and weaknesses? How can we stop forcing each other into our own cultural perspectives? These questions are similar to those asked by missionaries dealing with one-way, cross-cultural accommodation. But there is a crucial difference. In religious communities today—especially those in the global north—the accommodation goes in every direction, from all to all. All must leave, enter and accommodate to each other. But first, all must learn how to leave, and then actually leave and learn from each other. The mission tasks are the same but the process now involves everyone, and it is ongoing. Today we are all missionaries and whole communities are involved in this new, omnidirectional dynamic of God's mission. In the end, of course, this applies not only to religious houses but to our entire global community.

This doesn't just happen by itself. It requires intercultural competence or the ability to shift our knowledge/perception,



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attitudes and behavior with regard to commonality and difference:

- “Knowledge/perception” means developing a more detailed set of frameworks for perceiving and understanding patterns of cultural difference.
- “Attitudes” means appreciating the perceptions, values, beliefs, behavior and practices of people from different cultural (racial, gender, age-group) communities.
- “Behavior” means the ability to shift behavior by means of intercultural skills.

The requirements for this begin with having an adequate model or a structure, then a gauge to measure progress and, finally, competent guides or facilitators to give direction. In this paper I propose to describe the overall process. I will cover the Intercultural Development Continuum (IDC) (Barrett 1993) together with exit-and entry-learning (Larson and Smalley 1972, Kirby 2000). Exit-learning (or “learning to leave”) describes the learning process connected with the early part of the Development Continuum (dealing with ethnocentrism), and entry-learning (or “leaving to learn”) with the latter part (ethnorelativism). I will also discuss the relationship between culture and personality in the context of interculturality. This will segue into a comparison of Barrett’s continuum with a different model and gauge, Muriel Elmer’s (2005) Intercultural Competence Scale (ICS), which is based more on personality than culture. Finally, I will present the very practical Intercultural Conflict Style Inventory (ICSI) (Hammer 2009b: 219-232), which examines the way we handle conflict. This will be followed up with activities and suggestions for group discussion.

A Model

Although many development models have emerged over the last two decades (e.g., the Intercultural Competency Scale (ICS), which we will discuss later, and Stefano’s (2003) Mapping, Bridging,

Integration (MBI) model), we will focus on Milton Bennett’s Development Model for Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS). For religious communities, I would like to replace the word “Sensitivity” with “Living”, thereby changing it to “DMIL” (see Gittins 2015). This model understands intercultural development as a continuum ranging from “ethnocentrism” to what Bennett calls “ethnorelativism” or simply cultural sensitivity. Bennett’s colleague, Mitchell Hammer (2009a), has developed a test, the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI), to assess an individual’s or group’s progress along this continuum and the Intercultural Development Plan (IDP) which offers instructions on how to move from one level to the next.

Ethnocentrism versus Ethnorelativism

The continuum comprises two broad orientations: “ethnocentrism” and “ethnorelativism”. In the former, people see the world through their own eyes. This is only natural. Our socialization process conditions us to do so. It serves us well by protecting us against others, especially when they are the majority or a real threat to our wellbeing. But this is not the only perspective in the world. Ethnocentrism exists when the behaviors and beliefs of our primary socialization (years one to six) are taken to be the ONLY reality—the way God thinks! Within this general category there are three levels or orientations: denial, defense and minimization.

Ethnorelativism, or cultural sensitivity, constitutes nothing less than a new way of seeing, thinking and acting. In this advanced orientation multicultural communities become fully intercultural. They are able to integrate and benefit from their differences. They become conscious of deep cultural differences; they are able to monitor their reactions to them and adapt to them. Within this category there are also three levels or orientations: acceptance, adaptation and integration.

A Gauge and a Guide

Hammer's IDI is a 50-item online questionnaire that measures an individual's or group's primary orientation to cultural difference along a continuum. We are all at different levels or have different orientations to sameness and difference. It is important to know where we are situated on the continuum because this is our starting point for development. The IDI continuum only has five orientations because Hammer combines Bennett's final stage of integration with adaptation.

Hammer's IDP is meant to guide learners from one orientation to the next. He also offers development workshops on this to the corporate world. But whether one follows his development plan or develops on one's own, forward movement does not come naturally. It requires guidance and great effort. Nor does it involve a smooth transition.

There are likely to be many stops and starts. One cannot leap-frog and skip an orientation because each stage is the foundation for the next. Respect for human dignity and for the various dimensions of difference—genders, ages, races, languages, and cultures—is essential, and there can be no forcing or coercion of minorities by dominant cultures. The process is complicated. It involves hard work and there is no guarantee of reaching the goal of an intercultural community. But the alternative—certain chaos and the eventual disintegration of religious communities—is a not an option.

Denial

The first, and most biased, orientation or grade of ethnocentrism is denial. Here there is very little experience of other cultures. One's own culture is considered "the only real one," and others must "fit in". At this level, differences are invisible, and individuals and groups make sure they stay that way by forms of avoidance like

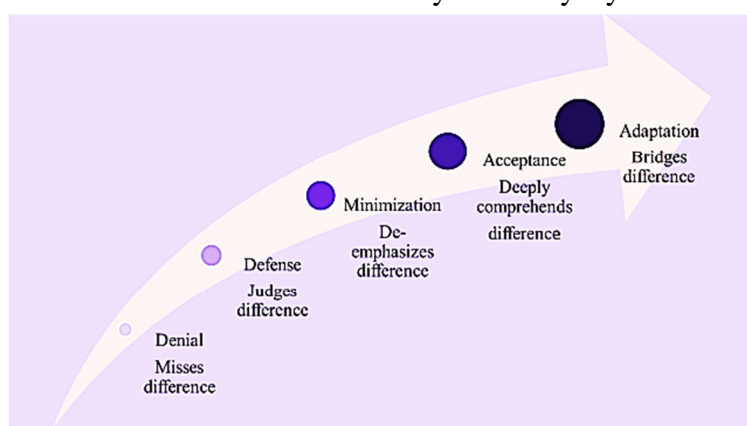
labelling "them" or isolating "them" physically in ghettos.

Other cultures are not acknowledged or they are dehumanized (e.g., using the

"n" word, or "polack"). Bennett's apt phrase for this is "aggressive ignorance", or unwillingness to face the facts for fear of the implications.

Denial in religious communities follows the same lines: when the community simply doesn't recognize difference as existing; when communities avoid cross-cultural encounters or wherever they experience difference. Here difference is interpreted as a defect or a bad habit. At this stage, the response of leadership to difference is usually authoritarian (e.g. "We don't allow smelly foreign foods in the kitchen!"). Responses by the members are often passive-aggressive (e.g., loud sighs showing disapproval at cultural difference).

At this stage, communities should strive for more inclusivity, and seek out experiences of other cultures or dimensions of difference. Because getting communities to do this as a group is very difficult, leadership must offer encouragement, motivation and assistance.



Hammer's 5 stage Continuum

Defense

The next orientation is that of defense. Here people see differences but can only understand them from the perspective of what is normative in their own culture. They are threatened by other cultures and view them through stereotypes¹. They are judgmental and polarize “us” against “them”. One’s own (or adopted) culture is viewed as “the most civilized” or “only viable or good one”. Attitudes toward others are critical and negative. There is no acceptance—it is “My way or the highway!” Although critical of others, they are uncritical of their own culture. They insulate and protect themselves with demeaning jokes, and jingoistic attitudes of patriotism and excessive nationalism. Another version of this defensive posture, often taken by minority groups, is to uncritically absorb all aspects of the dominant culture. This “reversal” stance is also a kind of defense because it defends one’s position in the dominant culture by going from total rejection to total acceptance (e.g., “going native”). Defense in religious communities follows the same patterns. Self-protection against threats from outside one’s community is natural and important, especially where one is in the minority, but it should diminish over time with experience of other cultures.

Cultural or religious intolerance arises when it does not diminish. This can take the form of crude proselytizing or crusading with little or no attempt at relating through dialogue or empathy. Superiors at this level are prone to inflexible, non-dialogical decision making and claim to know everything, (e.g., “I’ve known these people for 25 years, and I know the way they are”). Cultural superiority is always assumed by the dominant group and communities are generous—but only to help others fit it. Community responses to this begin with

the realistic view that differences are neither intolerable nor incompatible. They

are simply a fact, and there are always similarities on which we can build. No culture is without virtue or defects. We get beyond the superior stance by not comparing my grace with their weakness. We overcome stereotypes by discovering commonalities. If I claim a virtue, then I must look for similar virtues in them. If I see a blemish in them, I must look for similar defects in myself. In some ways we are all the same and, at the same time, we are all different. We need to look at both.

Minimization

Minimization is the transitional stage where one begins to move out of ethnocentrism into the more culturally sensitive orientations. But here we are still largely ethnocentric. Bennett aptly refers to this stage as “ethnocentrically multicultural”. Here bits of one’s own worldview are experienced as universal. Individuals and groups are no longer defensive, and think they are being inclusive, but use their own categories to interpret the other. Here difference is recognized but minimized or trivialized as unimportant. There is only one way to do it—ours! And others must adapt for their own good. At this orientation individuals or groups are not able to see their own culture. Due to the nature of socialization, like a fish in water, they take it for granted and make it normative.

Minimization in religious communities follows the same pattern. The dominant group in the community is aware of difference, and of privilege, which they feel they must maintain. They want to be open and accepting but deep differences are obscured. Leadership represses variations for the sake of standardization, order and the “good of the community”.

Here the dominant group subsumes minorities into the familiar. Typically they

¹ Evaluative overgeneralizations of personal traits assigned to groups,

maintain that “we are basically all the same!” They are closed to the perspective of the other (e.g., saying: “That’s not the way to pray!” when they mistakenly assume the other is praying). They assume that what works in the dominant culture (e.g., Myers-Briggs, Enneagram, IQ tests) is universal. They know that personalities are different but don’t understand how they are influenced by culture. Minority groups are made to conform so they must “go along in order to get along”. But they rebel if they begin to feel too powerless and manipulated. They may also cry “foul” or invoke the “culture card” when asked to change or adjust to the dominant group.

This, too, is a kind of minimization, for it reverses the action and trivializes the culture of the dominant group.

Communities make progress by taking steps to become more culturally self-aware. They need to perceive diversity as intrinsically valid and effectively meaningful. They need to understand their own culture better; understand culture general² categories or shared social characteristics (e.g., egocentric versus socio-centric) and culture-specific categories (e.g., Myers-Briggs), and the differences between them. Leadership needs to relax its stress on common policies for the “common good”, recognize deep discrimination practices and strive to get beyond surface political correctness.

Acceptance

Acceptance is the orientation that breaks away from ethnocentrism and moves into the culturally sensitive range on the continuum. It is quite unusual to find this advanced orientation in our world today. Here we find acceptable and creative ways of encountering cultural others, and multicultural groups start to become intercultural. Here individuals and whole communities express great interest and

curiosity in other cultures. Their own culture is experienced as just one of a number of complex worldviews. They view other cultures as different but equal and are able to understand cultural patterns from the perspective of the other.

This does not mean perfect agreement. Cultural difference may, in fact, be judged negatively (e.g., cannibalism), but the judgment is not ethnocentric. Individuals and groups at this level are committed to cultural diversity but don’t quite know how to adapt their behavior to meet the expectations of the other while maintaining ethical standards.

In religious communities, acceptance follows the same patterns. Persons and communities at this level are able to recognize their own personal and religious prejudices and view them as negotiable. They are able to enter into real dialogue. They know that “their ways” are not the “only ways”. They see that there are many ways to solve a problem or interpret reality. The ways of the other are also human and deserve respect. They understand the ways of others and their efforts to deal with their life circumstances. In addition, they have some knowledge and understanding of culture dynamics and the analytic skills of anthropology.

Here there is the need to go deeper into understanding difference. While valuing difference, ethical values and principles need to be maintained. Individuals and communities need to distinguish what is

negotiable from what is not. They need to work out the implications of acceptance, and avoid resentment, anger and community breakdown. They need to recognize the humanity and goodwill of the other without demanding conformity. They need to be able to withhold judgment and condemnation, and to allow for others what is not acceptable for themselves. Like Pope Francis, their response must be: “Who am I to judge?” They need to find a balance between what is unacceptable and what is not. And they need to learn the cultural “rules” for doing this from each

² Neutral, non-evaluative, comparative and relative, valid descriptions of a group’s preferences.

other (e.g., using resources like culture-drama).

Adaptation

At the level of adaptation, individuals and communities are able to shift perspective and adapt their behavior to different cultural contexts. Here they value difference and are able to look at the world “through different eyes”. They have a large repertoire of cultural frameworks and behaviors, and they have a certain sense for interculturality. They can use their experience in one cultural situation to provide information for future behavior in another. They can intentionally change their behavior in culturally appropriate and authentic ways. They can adapt without losing their own principles or core values. They operate out of a so-called “relative relativism” where variation is possible in dress, food, posture, or ways of praying—but not where “anything goes”—no torture, infanticide or cannibalism etc. Such ethical discernment is based on a combination of socialization and moral principles. They do not become the other, but they are able to think and behave in ways that are judged as culturally appropriate by the other.

Adaptation in community follows the same principles. Here communities are able to acknowledge and respect a variety of approaches to common tasks while maintaining moral principles. Here, they are interculturally competent and are able to behave in appropriate ways in other cultural contexts. At the same time there is no loss of identity. Indeed, personal integrity and identity are greatly enhanced. Members are able to make decisions that are based on information and reflection gained through their new analytic and behavioral skills. Leaders use this as a resource in decision-making for the benefit of the community. At this stage the community is “converted” to new ways of living together that are embraced by all.

The adaptation orientation touches on deep cultural convictions and beliefs (e.g., seeing the African belief in witchcraft as a

cultural response to universal questions like, “Why evil?”). Here, accepting the social reality of being religious in a community consisting of many cultures leads to greater empathy and pastoral relevance in the wider community. This orientation is nurtured by careful reflection, ongoing dialogue and mutual regard in reaching a consensus concerning what is acceptable for intercultural living. As one moves to increasingly broader and more inclusive, culturally sensitive perspectives, the difficulty and the time it takes to do this increase. The developmental task for religious communities is to continue honing their skills in shifting frames of reference, or code shifting. The challenges are many—how to be mutually intelligible while retaining one’s core identity, and how to find a common base or language for the changing community reality. But the rewards for community life and ministry are rich.

Integration

Integration is not so much a stage in itself as an extension of adaptation. It is the ongoing and ever-increasing ability to integrate the cultures of the other, and one’s own, into a new identity broadened by experience. This integration of interpersonal experience and integrity, without loss of identity, is a never-ending task. It includes the ability to generalize from one experience to another—to apply insights and behaviors gained from one cultural situation to applications in another—with ever-increasing sensitivity and skill.

For religious communities, this means losses and gains for each person while giving birth to a new way of living in community. Without losing their individual identity through intercultural living, each member gains a new intercultural identity. Each is affected and, in a real sense, effected by the other. Each intercultural community is therefore different and unique in itself. When a new member enters, the balance changes, and this

requires further work on the part of the entire community. This can only be achieved through a firm commitment to study, research and encounter other cultures and their key practices³, by making use of available tools and learning opportunities⁴, and through a comprehensive appreciation of cultural dynamics.

All of these steps and progressions may sound complex; even insurmountable. But intercultural community living is possible. Under the right conditions and with hard work, multicultural religious communities can develop into intercultural communities. The requirements are straightforward: increased knowledge, a change of attitude, new behavioral skills and absolute commitment by all. It is difficult. There are many challenges and pitfalls along the way. But for the future of religious life (and of the human race), there are no alternatives.

EXIT-LEARNING AND ENTRY-LEARNING

We will now turn to exit-learning and entry-learning which describe the two learning dimensions of the transformation process of a community from multicultural to intercultural. The first focuses on overcoming ethnocentrism; the second on engendering greater intercultural sensitivity.

Exit-Learning

How do we, religious, learn to recognize our narrow parochialism and move beyond

it? Unfortunately, our first culture does not prepare us for this. This is the work of exit-learning. It involves learning how to deal with our ethnocentrism by relaxing the hold that our first culture has on us. This includes the culture of our religious order and church culture, for these too differ from country to country. As religious, all of this constitutes our “tribalism”. We must be able to identify, describe and analyze our own tribal roots and experiences in order to deal with our ethnocentric blinders.

Another key element of this learning is submission. Before we can change our behavior and adapt, we need to learn how to submit and humble ourselves as Christ did (*Phil. 2:5-8*). Any prior experience of this is a great help. Therefore, exit-learning involves identifying and evaluating our prior experiences of submission and change. Finally, exit-learning must be done in familiar contexts, in one’s own culture before entering a multicultural community—not afterwards. This requires our focused and dedicated attention, for it has a momentous impact on planning and formation.

In terms of the intercultural continuum, exit-learning involves learning the principles of intercultural competency and taking on the ethnocentric challenges of the first three stages. At the stage of denial, exit-learning helps us recognize the reality of difference and respond using the available tools (see also footnote 4). Then at the stage of defense, it focuses on understanding and accepting difference. It helps us deal with our unfulfilled role expectations when differences collide. It helps us anticipate, prepare for and deal with submission—with the fact that we have to lay aside our old familiar roles and deal with the resulting role-deprivation. Finally, at the third stage of minimization, it focuses on learning to know ourselves—our cultures, roles, likes and dislikes. Here we begin to take on new roles through imitation and role-training exercises (e.g., “culture-drama”, <http://spiritualityand>

³ Key habits/practices for interacting with people of other cultures (Harris et al. 2004): sense of self and space, communication and language, dress and appearance, food and eating habits, time and time consciousness, relationships, values and norms, beliefs and attitudes, learning, work.

⁴ Learning opportunities include: training programs, personal Interactions, travel, workplace activities, intercultural journals, coaching (culture-drama), theatre, film, the arts, books, site visits, museums, outings and educational classes.

culture.com). Skills in research, cultural analysis and language learning are important aids. But the brunt of the work falls on each of us personally and we must take charge of our own learning process.

In summary: exit-learning means learning how to leave our first culture. It is about learning to recognize and loosen the blinders of our tribe. It means learning to submit and what we must change to do so. It means knowing and evaluating any prior experience of this. It means knowing our personality, our likes and dislikes, and learning how to be an outsider among insiders. It means knowing our orientation on the continuum and understanding the process of gaining intercultural competence. It means knowing the challenges and identifying and managing the resources that can move us along the continuum. Finally, it means setting real goals with concrete progress indicators and making a development plan with the available resources.

Entry-Learning

Entry-learning or “leaving to learn” (Kirby, 2000) is the process of striving to be less and less alien. In exit-learning we learned how to submit and put aside our first culture. Now we are ready to put on the behavior, values and perspectives of the other culture; ready to take on their worldview and become an outsider inside that world, and adjust to the implications. In terms of the intercultural continuum, entry-learning refers to the activities that deal with the three stages of ever-increasing cultural sensitivity. It focuses on moving ever-deeper into an intercultural identity from acceptance through adaptation and integration. Unlike exit-learning, this cannot be done “at home”. It can only be achieved in a multicultural community.

Our first culture does not prepare us for this kind of learning. We prefer familiar things: the ways, the people and the language of the culture in which we were socialized. Leaving all this in order to learn

unfamiliar ways from unfamiliar people goes against the grain. We need to overcome this attitude. But besides this, we don’t know how to gain access to the world of the other. Our first tasks, then, are to deal with negative attitudes and gain access. We need help for this—help to change and submit ourselves, help to imitate and learn from others, and help to become more ready, willing and able to change.

We gain access by imitation, as we did in our first culture. We need to be a child again, to follow, imitate and learn. Once again, we need to deal with our cultural blindness, especially that which comes from not being a member of the other tribe. We overcome this by diving in, living in their contexts, imitating and absorbing. Through our interaction, we gradually begin to recognize anomalies, things we didn’t expect like reaching out for a handshake but receiving a bow. Then, through reflection on our unfulfilled expectations (i.e., I was expecting a handshake; why did he/she bow?), we arrive at a premise (i.e., perhaps they greet by bowing). Then we experiment by imitating and bowing back. Through a constant process of experience, reflection and imitation, we gradually begin to understand and adapt. Conflicts arise when we ignore the anomalies, and don’t reflect and imitate. We must be able to set aside our old roles and “action chains”, such as greeting protocol, in order to try on new behaviors

By shifting our behavior and imitating, we also begin to shift our perspectives and form new categories. Gradually, the blindness that comes from not being a member of the other tribe gives way to new understanding and insight. We increase our cultural repertoire and form new categories for understanding difference, or code-shifting, in two ways: first, by identifying and adapting to the culture-general orientations (e.g., becoming more socio-centric rather than egocentric or high-context rather than low-

context in our thinking and behavior—see discussion in Hall 1976), and second, by identifying and adapting to the culture-specific roles and behaviors of the other (e.g., their etiquette at meals or greeting protocol). Gradually we decrease our cultural stereotyping and increase our understanding, acceptance and adaptation. As we take on new behaviors and roles, new preferred personal characteristics (e.g., more forthrightness) and culture-general orientations, a new intercultural identity is added to our old one.

In summary: entry-learning means leaving or laying aside our first culture in order to enter into and learn other cultural worlds. We take up this challenge of becoming less and less alien by unlearning familiar but inappropriate behavior, and learning unfamiliar but appropriate intercultural behavior. First we gain access by being ready, willing and able to change and submit. Then we submit and change by following and imitating. Gradually, we change our preferred personality characteristics to aid the process of entering. Gradually, we reduce stereotyping and increase our repertoire of culture-general orientations. By taking on new roles we adapt our behavior, deal with role-deprivation and achieve a deeper cultural perspective. As we shift our perspectives and behavior, we acquire new categories for understanding similarity and difference, and we begin to steer our adaptive behavior with refined ethical judgments. Finally, we are able to act as an orientation bridge for others. For all of this we need to set priorities and goals with clear identifiers. In this way, with help from the other, we learn to be an inside outsider.

Community Planning

In multicultural religious communities, exit- and entry-learning are group projects and must be coordinated. Planning involves the community as well as the individual. The community must come to grips with their goals and expectations together.

Trained facilitators are needed to assess the intercultural and psychological strengths and weaknesses of the community, and to help the members discern and address their challenges with regard to the key attributes of knowledge, attitudes and behavior. Leadership must direct this process. They must know the developmental orientations of their members, guide development planning and provide the technical, emotional and spiritual resources needed for development.⁵ If they don't, individuals may gain some level of competency but communities cannot become intercultural.

PERSONALITY AND CULTURE

Besides involving changes in one's worldview and attitudes, progress along the intercultural continuum also involves changes in behavior, which relate as much to personality as they do to culture. It is important, therefore, to briefly discuss this relationship. They are often confused—especially by those at the early stages of the continuum where, because the influence of culture is still hidden or minimized, difference is largely subsumed under personality, which is more evident. Here I will try to distinguish the two as they relate to interculturality.

Personality is derived from the Latin and Greek work for mask or role—*persona*. Although the exterior mask concealed the interior person, personality now refers to the core, the “essence of the person”. It is an individual's unique mixture of enduring behaviors and attitudes, beliefs and values. It is the way an individual adjusts to, acts and reacts to any given situation. It is formed as part of the cultural socialization

⁵ Resources include: For corporate interests: Mitchell Hammer's IDI and IDP. For Missionaries and Religious: Sr. Katie Pierce, www.interculturalconsultation.com. Muriel Elmer's ICS online test <http://icsprofile.org/>, and her 12 Skill Builders. Joe Stephano's Mapping, Bridging, Integration (M.B.I) model. <http://www.iegd.org/spanish800/adjuntos/distefano1.pdf>.

process and develops in each individual over time.

Culture includes all the processes that shape persons and by which they are related as a social group. It is the “human made” part of our environment which includes material, symbolic, institutional, and moral culture. It is “the form of our social life”. It is complex, involves time and space, and is holistic. In summary, it is “a meaning-making system”, “our social skin” and “an enduring social reality” (Gittins 2015).

As it relates to interculturality, culture is an overarching category, the matrix for transformation. Personality refers to the unique makeup of individuals including their idiosyncrasies, their differences and what makes them special. But culture refers to the group—the customary, standard or normal and acceptable behavior of the group. This includes the individual personalities within it, their idiosyncrasies and all behavior that deviates from the cultural norm. In terms of the intercultural continuum, culture is the overarching category that embraces the whole range of personal characteristics. A person’s personality is, therefore, an aspect of culture. It is his/her particular way of being and expressing the normative cultural facts, and, as such, it is not to be treated differently from culture. The tasks are the same for each at every stage of the continuum. Playing the “personality card”, for example, is no different from playing the “culture” or “race” card in delaying or sidetracking the one’s progress along the continuum.

Different Viewpoints

The disciplines of psychology (the study of personalities) and anthropology (the study of cultures) see personality and culture from quite different perspectives. Psychology views culture as only one aspect of the total makeup of an individual. From this perspective, the agents of socialization include: family, school, environment, religion, media and culture.

Anthropology, on the other hand, sees personality as the way a specific individual lives out his/her culture, including the preferred personal characteristics that are within the range of normal cultural behavior. From an anthropological perspective, we humans are socialized into a culture that includes understandings of family, school, environment, religion, media etc. and personality. Much of the confusion about the difference between the two terms arises from these differences. The perspective of psychology is inadequate for understanding our aim of intercultural competence, as I will now demonstrate.

THE INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE SCALE (ICS)

In a multicultural community, the greater the difference between the culture groups, the greater is the difficulty in achieving integration. Tests such as Hammer’s IDI and ICSI are important indicators. But we must also know our personality characteristics and how they are similar to or different from the cultural norm. This is where Muriel Elmer’s ICS (2000), which assess our personal preferences, our likes and dislikes, comes in.

The ICS is an online test⁶ that measures 12 factors or personality characteristics⁷ needed for working and living in a second culture. It is based on research done by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) on the qualities needed for effective cross-cultural communication. This was later adapted for missionaries⁸. It

⁶ The tests are \$15.00 each. Contact the author for access.

⁷ Elmer’s 12 Intercultural Characteristics: (1) Approachable, (2) Intercultural Receptivity, (3) Positive Orientation, (4) Forthrightness, (5) Social Openness, (6) Enterprise, (7) Shows Respect, (8) Perseverance, (9) Flexibility, (10) Cultural Perspectivism, (11) Venturesome, (12) Social Confidence.

⁸ This was done by making correlations between the scores of 350 missionaries and

claims universal validity, but retains a substantial bias toward N. American culture.

Unlike the IDI, it does not measure one's orientation on a cultural continuum, but rather one's preferred personality characteristics against those deemed to be most interculturally effective. It, therefore, offers an approach or model for achieving intercultural competency more in line with personality than culture.

A high score means greater ability to function effectively in other cultures. A middle range score means less ability, but still within the range of acceptability for those working interculturally or cross-culturally. A low score means one's preferred attitudes and behaviors make it difficult to interact effectively with other cultures. Mid-range and low factor scores need improvement. The ICS also offers 12 "skill-builders" as a prescription for improvement by helping one's likes and dislikes correspond more closely to those that are interculturally effective.

It is important to know one's personality characteristics because self-knowledge, especially at the level of minimization, is needed to advance along the continuum. But one cannot achieve this by simply perfecting the 12 preferred characteristics in isolation. Personality perspective alone is inadequate for our purpose because the characteristics are given different emphasis in different cultures and at different stages of the continuum. Changes in one's preferred personality characteristics, such as, from being socially awkward to becoming more forthright, might, in some cases, facilitate interculturality. But in other cases, for example, socio-centric cultures, forthrightness would not be emphasized and having it may be a distinct disadvantage.

The ICS puts, more or less, the same emphasis⁹ on all 12 characteristics for achieving intercultural competence. But different cultures have different expectations concerning what particular personality characteristics are normative. Furthermore, the ICS takes no account of the developmental continuum. Yet, when looking at it from the perspective of the continuum, depending on the stage or orientation, some characteristics appear to be more helpful than others. The characteristics "approachable", "shows respect" and "intercultural receptivity", for example, would seem to be more important at the earlier ethnocentric orientations, whereas "cultural perspectivism", "venturesome" and "social confidence" might be more valuable at the culturally sensitive orientations of acceptance and adaptation. But even this would depend on whether one is entering a socio-centric or an egocentric culture.

Thus, the continuum provides the all-important structure for interpreting the relative weight of the characteristics at any given stage. Finally, there is no connection between improving one's characteristics and the process of worldview change and code-switching which are key markers for the transition from ethnocentrism to ethnorelativism.

The ICS relies too much on personality and not enough on culture or cultural dynamics. Bennett's intercultural continuum is more adequate for our purposes because culture is the overarching category and the dynamics of culture structure the achievement of intercultural competency. Nevertheless, the ICS and its "skill-builders" do provide important concrete guidelines for improving the 12 preferred characteristics that do play an important role in the overall process of development. At any stage of the continuum, one or the other of these characteristics may play an

their ability to live contentedly and be effective in another cultural context.

⁹ There is a difference but this is not calculated on the basis of a development continuum or cultural-general themes.

important role in facilitating the transition to the next. The best possible scenario is to use the ICS characteristics with a keen eye to discerning their relative importance along the continuum.

THE INTERCULTURAL CONFLICT STYLE INVENTORY (ICSI)

Our religious communities today are multicultural combining many different nationalities, ethnicities, races and cultures. And, where there is difference there are bound to be disagreements. Conflicts arise where our differences collide. We have all experienced and have tried to deal with them. But our ways of doing this differ. We learn our style for dealing with conflict from home, our first culture.

A “conflict style” is a group’s way of dealing with disagreements and communicating emotion. Some deal directly; others indirectly. Some are emotional; others are restrained. Research (Hammer 2009b) has shown that the cultural dimension of direct/indirect is central for dealing with disagreements across all cultures. Emotional expressiveness or restraint is another fundamental dimension of cultural difference in conflict style. These combine to form four universally applicable conflict styles.

- 1) direct/explicit and emotionally restrained (Discussion Style)
- 2) direct/explicit and emotionally expressive (Engagement Style)
- 3) indirect and emotionally restrained (Accommodation Style)
- 4) indirect and emotionally expressive (Dynamic Style)

These four styles offer an important cultural generalization framework¹⁰. They

¹⁰ Other such frameworks (see Hofstede 2001) include high- and low-context cultures (e.g., “Let me take you there” is the way Africans give directions); masculinity (achievement and competition) versus femininity cultures (cooperation and nurturing); high-uncertainty avoidance versus low-uncertainty avoidance

are interpretive categories involving knowledge, attitudes and behavior that lead to different strategies which can either escalate or reduce tensions. We reduce tensions by increasing our intercultural competency (see the figure below, adapted from M. Hammer’s ICSI).

The ICSI is a pen and paper test that generates a “conflict style”, our culturally conditioned response to problems and disagreements. Knowing our style helps us to resolve disagreements and conflicts across cultures. It assists mediation and facilitates problem solving for mutual understanding, harmony and productivity. It reduces judgmental attitudes and helps manage stress by breaking the emotional feedback loop. It lessens misinterpretation by developing more accurate and effective communication, and it helps form intercultural communities by helping us build relationships with greater teamwork and effectiveness.

The ICSI can also provide a baseline assessment of a community’s response to conflict. Knowing the different styles and how their interaction can increase or reduce tensions is important. Having this knowledge can help leadership coordinate group relations, their contributions to community goals, plan their development

cultures, which emphasize or de-emphasize rules and order, and are the result of stress; and high or low power-distance cultures, where the high power-distance let hierarchy define their relationship and low power-distance try to see their relationships as egalitarian; and long-term cultures which postpone immediate gain for larger gain later (e.g., the “Asian miracle”) versus short-term cultures (e.g., African) which seek immediate gain (see: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U-XdlbgFxZo> G. Hofstede and Gudykunst).

and facilitate their growth. By increasing a community's awareness of themselves and each other in terms of the ways they are the same and different, the ICSI enables cultural differences to become assets rather than obstacles. Thus it helps communities develop new ways of relating together so that their different conflict styles add value to community life.

<i>Direct</i>	1. DISCUSSION	2. ENGAGEMENT
<i>Indirect</i>	3. ACCOMODATION	4. DYNAMIC
	<i>Emotionally Expressive style</i>	<i>Emotionally Restrained style</i>

Direct versus indirect styles

- Direct style places meaning inside the verbal message; indirect places meaning outside
- Direct style uses precise and explicit language; indirect uses ambiguity and vagueness
- Direct style relies on face-to-face resolution; indirect on third-party resolution
- Direct style speaks its mind; indirect exercises discretion
- Direct style is verbally assertive in offering opinions; indirect talks around differences
- Direct style persuades by reasoned argument; indirect through "facework"
- Direct style relies on objective information; indirect on contextual information
- Direct style relies on verbal and written communication; indirect on context
- Direct style goes straight to the point; indirect hints at or suggests the main point
- Direct style is problem/solution (task) oriented; indirect is relationship-repair oriented

Emotionally restrained vs expressive styles

- Emotionally restrained mask both verbal and nonverbal emotion; expressive show emotion verbally and nonverbally
- Restrained control emotions by internalizing and keeping it in for the sake of harmony; expressive control emotions by externalizing and letting it out for harmony
- Restrained find humor risky; expressive find humor useful
- Restrained minimize displays of feelings; expressive maximize displays of feelings
- Restrained constrain their vocalization; expressive vocalize explosively
- Restrained show credibility by focusing on the task; expressive by being "emotionally present" and become violent if asked to "calm down"
- Restrained develop trust through emotional control; expressive through expression
- Restrained admire being cool and self-contained; expressive animated involvement

A Mental Test

Styles tend to make themselves known through the proverbs of a culture. Here are a number of proverbs from different countries. Try to see which are direct or indirect, emotionally expressive or restrained. Which combination appeals to you most? Put yourself in the appropriate quadrant (see former page).

Direct or indirect?

"Nothing done with intelligence is done without speech!"

Greek proverb

"Hear one and understand ten."

Japanese proverb

"Say what you mean and mean what you say."

American proverb

"It is good to know the truth, but it is better to speak of palm trees."

Arab proverb

Emotionally expressive
or restrained?

"The first to raise their voice loses the argument."

Chinese proverb

"What is nearest the heart is nearest the mouth."

Irish proverb

"After a storm, fair weather; after sorrow, joy."

Russian proverb

"Silence produces peace, and peace produces safety."

Swahili proverb

Conclusion

Multicultural religious communities today need intercultural competence. In this paper I have discussed ways to understand and achieve this. Bennett's DMIL provides a grand model by pointing out the direction and the process. The concepts of exit-learning and entry-learning enhance this model and show the way forward through submission and change. The preferred personality factors of the ICS increase development potential, but they need the structure of the DMIL. And insights into our conflict styles provided by the ICSI serve as a useful starting point for development. Together, these instruments offer a strategy and enough guidance to begin a long and arduous, but very necessary, journey toward competence—one that demands commitment, coordination and good leadership. But none of these devices will do unless they are undertaken by the community with compassion, concern and love.

For Discussion

- Explain your preferred conflict style. What are the strengths/weaknesses of your style?
- How is your style similar to or different from others in your community? How does this affect your interaction with them?
- Talk about a disagreement you encountered. How did you manage it?

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Interculturality and Multiculturalism: social and anthropological perspective



Martin Nkafu Nkemnkia

1. Experience and memory

1.1. Experience

After the theory of perception (not discussed in this reflection), two fundamental procedures enter in the sphere of knowledge: experience and memory. The reason why I am introducing these points is because, whenever a new society is being generated, necessarily a new experience starts and consequently, memory is no longer the possession of a particular cultural group, but rather the result of dialogue between cultures. In this case, the new, multicultural experience is the fruit of a shared life lived among people, previously different from each other, but actively in search of a new identity.

As regard to experience, it is certainly from it that all human beings develop and acquires the sense of life, which, fully lived, generates memory, to be considered here as capacity of remembering the value of the past.

Generally, it is believed that, memory is that which generates experience. In my

younger studies, reflections and writing, I was also thinking in this way¹. I have now realised that without experience, there is no memory of a past. This is why I prefer, in this reflection to deal with experience before considering memory as such.

In fact, it is from every experience that originates memory and both realities determine a particular cultural identity. In other words, experience is an acquired knowledge through perception and the follow-up of perception. Generally in philosophy and cultural anthropology, experience is understood as the sensitive (tangible) component of the cognitive act, that direct intuition of emotional contents.

In this case, to make an experience has the same value as learning or doing something new and, it is all this that results to knowledge. Experience is therefore a continuous act and, since human beings are always in activity, either when they are asleep and when they are awake. In this case, experience is a process of human awareness and advancement of knowledge.

This is what, sooner or later determines a civilisation and thus, the new identity of individuals of a particular society. In this case, once more, experience is the teacher of life and the deposit of values recognised through the faculty of memory.

In fact, no one can declare to know something unless after having had an experience of it, that is, unless one has personally perceived and memorised the data of perception, the object of knowledge.

¹ Cf. Martin Nkafu Nkemnkia., *African Vitalogy – a step forward in African thinking*, Pauline's Publications. Nairobi Kenya.. 1999. Memory pp. 178 – 181; Experience: pp. 181 – 182.

Through experience one acquires opinion, determination, a specific description of the reality. Experience enlightens the darkness of the mind, eliminates ignorance and reduces contradictions. Experience remains, for every living being, the first step of experimental science.

The concept of movement derives from experience. This is also understood as the passage from one phenomenon to another; from one fact to another, from ignorance to knowledge, from one society to another, from culture to another. Whatever is static cannot make an experience, it is dead reality. The whole circle of life, the history of every living being, unfolds through experience. Experience as such is perceived and lived in two spheres: subjective sphere (the thought, the world of the intellect) and the objective sphere (spoken language and discourse).

To conclude this point on experience, I would like to affirm that the activity of a particular mind, be it of any cultural background, is always in itself, a subjective form of experience. The human mind normally relates to objects of its surroundings and this is the way nature presents itself and is perceived. In fact, any reasoning is possible only after perception, without which any memory is empty.

Through the elaboration of sensory data, perceived in a particular moment and cultural context, the human mind and its reasoning activity, generate in a particular knowing subject, the reality which is, in conformity to itself and enables the intellect to formulate the same reality in a discursive, written and meaningful sense.

Thus one arrives at a formulation of the concept, though still particular in its context, it is already universal in its meaning and therefore acceptable by all human beings. These concepts have the possibility of transforming the reality into significant words and expressions that characterises the memory of a data society.

Reason is placed after perception as experience of the memory in act, and the

intellect result to be the home of human expression.

1.2 Memory

At this point it is possible to analyse memory in which, all the values and secrets of the past are disclosed.

In every culture, memory (the capacity of remembering) is a faculty without which every experience can result to none sense. Therefore, memory is necessary in order to remember what one has seen, learn and acquired in time. The forms of objects perceived during the experience are preserved in the memory. As the subject grows biologically and physiologically, the organism responsible for the faculty of memory becomes stable. The more stability grows the more the forms of the reality in the human mind become clearer and more distinct. Thus human beings grow in knowledge and becomes more and more expert in life.

Essentially, memory is a faculty of all living beings possessing a mind. That is why it is more precise to define it as that faculty of the mind which remembers things known in the past; in other words, it is also a re-cognisance of that which is known, a reiterated knowledge. Memory becomes in this way the centre of sensation, stimulus of the mind and as such, is indispensable for the formation of concepts as already exposed in the last paragraph.

At this point, one could desire to know which are the laws allowing man to remembering something, and guaranteeing that, such a particular memory is referring exactly to that particular perception made in the past. To the memory the soul is linked and is indicated as "human spirit", responsible for all that is knowledgeable, understandable.

It is therefore necessary to investigate on this reality: the soul. There is no human being without a soul as there is no society without a soul, without its cultural identity.

1.2.1. The soul and memory

What can be said now is that it is the soul which characterises human activity. It cannot be precisely located in the human body or, in society, for it is an integral part of it.

In this way, when a person becomes sick, the soul is sick too, however only in regard to the affected organ, and consequently to the rest of the organism. According to this conception, the soul is considered as a constitutive faculty and also as the greatest reality created by the divine will, which the human mind can conceive. The soul is the expression given in philosophical context to the vital force which characterises the activity of thought itself. By it (the soul), one can therefore indicate also that which animates the body.

The amount of memory accumulated by an individual depends on the length and quality of the experience as well as the intensity of the impressions coming from the intelligible objects through the process of perception. The preservation of memory and one's own cultural identity certainly depends on the condition in which the organism (the society) operates.

The human mind in its activity remains the reservoir of knowledge and has, as a rule is the generator of thought, of which, reason is the architect, the artifice.

To conclude, let us summarise the role of memory in the process of knowledge. Memory is linked to the quantity of information received through the perception of the senses and is the actualisation of the past. Experience is prior to memory though the ability to remember, remains for the knowledge an infinite process without end. Forgetfulness or complete oblivion is due to a wrong use of the imagination and reason, or to the ageing process of the sensory cells. Habits consolidated through learning in the animal world (including human beings) all contribute, in the formation of memory. The expression "to learn by heart" simply means, repetition and actualisation of knowledge.

We already said that memory is linked to the senses. For this reason, we can speak of memory of sight, hearing and touch. Storytelling and speech delivery constitute the area of the manifestation of memory, even though the remembering process sometimes betrays and does not comprehend the memory. This is a second stage of the knowledge. Memory as a whole is what is called "knowledge in action" in the subject's experience.

In many cultural contexts, memory coincides with knowledge. In this case, one can also say that memory, as such, is the recognition of the past and the foundation of the present. The future is entrusted to the fantasy and imagination since the idea of the future finds its consistency only in the present moment.

Since this is the natural way of perceiving cultural identity, finding oneself in a multicultural context and experience, which are the elements that guarantee an authentic new cultural identity? One can still ask: what are the past cultural values that can be refer to, within the multicultural shared experience? To which juridical institution can one refer to, in a multicultural environment to defend ones identity? .These interrogations give room for reflection and search of a new paradigm on which a true and authentic cultural identity of a citizen of the word can be rooted.

2. Identity, diversity, complementarily, options for education in a multicultural society.

We all know that multicultural societies are constituted only when there is a full recognition, by each of the cultures present, and each one of them represents its own history, memorial and cultural heritage. Multicultural experience and sharing a common life in the same society and environment is possible only when each of the different cultures present willingly welcomes other people's cultural values. This experience is capable, if honest, of generating a new cultural

identity and again, can mark the starting point of a new history of the society, and consequently becomes the deposit of values and of cultural memory.

2.1 Culture, cultures and intercultural communication

Communication, communion and community are rooted in the Latin word "*munus*" or rather: "*munificare*." In its original sense it means "*to make gift*." The further one goes, it becomes easy to understand the concept of communication as the capacity of "sharing", that is "of participating with others of what one really has." Communication becomes possible within a process of relationships between people and different reality to the point that, everybody and everyone receives that which is unknown, consequently, enriching one's own knowledge, while participating in others' acquisitions and knowledge. This makes of each person an indispensable treasure to the other. Thus, the necessity of cultivating in everyone, "a culture of giving or of sharing".

We all know that the process of integrating different cultural systems among themselves favours the creation of a new cultural form. Thus, the necessity of education, intercultural formation and dialogue in the society. The issue of immigration involves all aspects of the society in which are made known the positive aspects of every culture, elevating them to a universal dimension in such a way that people are ever more brought closer to one another.

The difference between one culture and another mostly depends on the way values are conceived and interpreted. In fact, not all that is held as a value by one culture is given the same value and meaning by others. From here could emerge what is being called "cultural relativism". Therefore, it should be recognized that no culture can be considered superior to another just as no culture can be considered itself as inferior to the others. Rather, we could affirm that every culture is different

from the others, and none of the cultures can identify itself with the other. Every identity presupposes diversity and diversity remains the starting point for every form of intercultural dialogue and communication between cultures.

Any respectful educational system transmits knowledge and opens towards understanding of other cultures in order to better appreciate them. This is why the educator and intercultural communicator has as duty to generate in everyone engaged in this process of learning, the awareness, and therefore the possibility to participate to the construction of a new and meaningful culture, without at the same time cancelling their communalities and differences.

3. Multiculturality and Interculture

Let us consider now the intercultural and multicultural reality that characterizes our society of today, also due to the process of immigration and phenomena of globalization.

While the term "multiculturalism" describes, from a simplistic perspective, the reality in which many cultures found themselves in their experiences of sharing and in the light of the process of immigration, as a logical consequence of international relations, the term "interculture" goes beyond the descriptive datum, setting the requirements for dialogue among the new cultures in terms of reciprocal commitment and interdependent relationships.

Consequently, interculturality can then be seen as a reciprocal movement and that which overcomes the unidirectional transmission of knowledge, favouring the individuation of values and the importance of sharing. The leading idea that retains intercultural education as "the norm of education", is what leads to the affirmation of the principle according to which, any formation and education of the citizen towards globalization and responsible freedom, is "intercultural", otherwise it is not an educative system.

From this principle derives the methodological criterion on which basis one can affirm that any form of intercultural education involves all the aspects of formation in its subjective and social dimension. Consequently, it can be said that the formation of teachers in this sense is not optional, rather “an essential strategy” in the realization of the policies of living together, and individuating objectives, structures and resources necessary for the education of citizens of tomorrow. Interculture has therefore to penetrate all aspects of human formation of the citizenship, be it at the practical or theoretical level.

In any case, the formation and intercultural education, is not new in the field of knowledge, but has to be seen as a paradigm by which one can rereads and redefines all knowledge beginning from the manifold differences and plurality that characterizes today's cultural contexts. Therefore, interculturality presupposes collective and cooperative knowledge.

In the process of formation and intercultural education, nursery and primary education remain an area of great interest in every sense. This is why one can affirm that pursuing the intercultural aspects and program in society is a common goal for every educator. This then is the central point in the formation of the new cultural identity and awareness of otherness and generally, a linking point between the self and others. All this certainly implies the rediscovery of the specificity of each individual and human person in the society. This is why we affirm that interculturality is intimately connected with the formation of the planetary citizenship within a logic of unity. Every human being is a citizen of the world.

Expressing a culture in its varied ways is that which characterizes a civilization, further understood as the memory of a given society. It becomes easy to affirm that culture can simply be expressed as civilization, memory and identity.

At this point, every consideration regarding culture refers necessarily to human existence, to the human person in his or her identity, the life situation. It refers to being human in their essence, action and growth.

4. Interculture, dialogue and inter-dependence

In order to prepare and educate the human person in an intercultural dimension and to generate a new cultural identity, one has to bear in mind the following propositions:

- perceiving in the first place, that interculture is a mutual exchange of gifts;
- secondly one has to perceive interculture as a new way of considering internationality due to the process of immigration and recognizing every immigrant as a new citizen, from which is derived the concept of immigration as one of the principles of globalization of internationality.

Within this framework it becomes essential to consider cultural diversity as value and the awareness of the interdependence of cultures as progress toward civilization. It becomes essential to consider formation and intercultural education as a favourable condition of dialogue among the different cultures. It is indispensable to consider intercultural education as a consequence of knowledge and understanding of processes through which the construction of national culture and the cultures of otherness has been possible. Therefore, formation and intercultural education is a necessary condition through which one can elaborate individual and collective values on which the rights and dignity of every human person can be rooted in respect to one's own experience and history.

In this case, the formation and intercultural education is a necessary condition for the acquisition of common attitude or behaviour as regards to every person. This is why it has been said that interculture is a means and criteria for respecting

differences, for the policy of a democratic society, as means to bring and maintain peace in the world and guarantee human rights, preserving the great values of humanity.

What has been elaborated in the past paragraphs can be summarized as follows: the process goes moves from a state of dependence to independence, from the later to solidarity and reciprocity, from reciprocity to cooperation and finally from all this to interdependence between different peoples and cultures in the world. Institutions of education, schools of every order and grade remain “the ideal context”, *topos*, proper for this particular experience where men and women can open up in experiencing cultural diversity in a deep and continuous way, enriching emotional and intellectual tools which enable each one to face this challenge with responsibility.

To be competent and professional is an acquisition. The teaching profession is to be therefore considered as that of the intellectuals who, going beyond knowledge as pure cognition, place emphasis on the possibility of learning ever more and acquiring knowledge in every new cultural context. In this way, through a personal example a teacher could transmit to students the ability to relate with “the otherness”, and to cultural difference.

If we consider the school as “a laboratory” for intercultural education and formation, it follows that these environments or in these schools in this institution one must be taught how to learn and to use every information as a means to produce culture, helping the mind to reflect on what is being learned and acquired.

“The ideal context (*topos*)” will help enable each and everyone to recognize one’s proper sense of belonging to the world and perception of oneself as a member of a globalizing world and as an agent of intercultural dialogue. Thus, they will be able to live with people of diverse ethnic groups and cultures for a common good.

The primary intent of the school as a laboratory, conjugates the memory of the past (diachronic aspect) with that of today (the synchronic aspect), opening the human person’s mind towards transcendence, in a process in which, instructing means educating. In this way, it becomes possible to render quality to human persons more than simply attributing to each one a competence. Consequently, it becomes evident that education consists in offering meaning to life.

Every human being is a relational being: in relation with oneself, with others, and with the surrounding world, open to the supernatural. The world citizen is above all, a person considered in all its dimensions: intellectual, creative, and spiritual. He distinguishes himself in a clear identity within ethics, psychological attitude, relational capacity, social and political commitment and is aware of his interdependence with others.

This citizen has a clear religious dimension (awareness of one’s own spiritual dimensions, openness to the other, respect of religious liberty, coherence with one’s proper beliefs). He has a professional identity (ability to cooperate and to work in groups, creativeness, search for quality, adaptation to technologies, flexibility and availability to the changes), cultural identity (awareness to belong to a precise cultural group).

Whenever one works to promote the intercultural dimension of the society, one is working for a new human identity and a new citizenship in the world.

5. New humanism

In the adventure of the construction of a new world, the process goes from solidarity to reciprocity, from independence to cooperation with the aim of transforming differences into complementarily. One proceeds in dialogue, learning to really love oneself, knowing that the measure of great love is that of giving one’s life to others. If the new world citizens could act in this way, wherever

they find themselves, everyone would always feel at home and confirm that, to undertake the way of internationality, of globalization, of otherness, one needs to go out of his or her confinements to be clothed by others, and so doing will be enriched by eternal values hidden in the multiplicity of cultures of the planet.

All that has been said till now enables one to realize that we are in front of a new culture, a new vision of human development. This experience of sharing allows men and new peoples to experience the universal dimension of love. The model of the human person emerging from this new culture is that which has gone beyond the ordinary level of "*homo politicus*", "*economicus*" and has reached the status of *homo integrus* (integral man / world man), "*homo clarianus*", capable of giving and receiving and above all, capable of a self-renewal.

The characteristic of the new man, *homo clarianus*, is really that of affiliation to a world without boundaries. Becoming citizens of the world, each individual will become aware of the importance of a proper presence and active participation in the building of society at all levels. It is only in this way that one can interpret the world in terms of universality, of internationality, of globalization, liberty, of equality and responsibility, of interdependence, since each person is a part of a "whole".

A multicultural society needs a proper lexicon with a plurality of meanings through which it will arrive at a new language capable of facilitating communication, peaceful and intercultural living amongst its citizens. This is why it is necessary to arrive at a new definition of those concepts as culture, race, ethnicity, people, community, citizens, since the subjects to whom they were formally referred to, have changed.

A new dictionary will liberate each and everyone from all forms of ignorance on questions about identity and diversity, allowing everyone to consider every

individual as an irreplaceable and essential member of the human family. Let us now analyse some concepts of common usage, bearing in mind what we have previously expressed.

Intercultural terminologies:

Dependence. Wherever there is dependence, there is no form of dialogue since any form of freedom is absent, there is no equality, respect of differences, and above all there is a lack of the acknowledgement of other peoples' dignity. The other, in this case, is an object of desire. Finally, dependence is also link to exploitation.

Independence. It is possible to be independent from oppression, subjection from a state of slavery. With independence everyone experiences a statue of liberty. Independence is therefore a victory of self-identity and governance. There is no subjugation as regards independence just as there is not yet equality, because there is no recognition of other people's identity. Tied up to independence are all racial systems, nationalisms and sovereignty of the state. For independence to acquire its own true value, one has to resort to international and intercultural dialogue, tightening relationships between different peoples in their rights and dignity.

Interdependence. Since dependence is not the best way to realize cultural, political, economic and religious identities of particular peoples, and since independence often pushes certain people to a closure of themselves, it follows that for the realization of a worldwide community, relationship has to be tighten between different races and cultures. The process that favours such cultural exchange among different people and ensures that each maintains his/her proper identity within "the whole" is interdependence. In this context, each interlocutor is freely moved to share, through the process of

dialogue, his/her proper cultural values, ethics, morals, and religious values with others, thus contributing to the edification of the international community.

Solidarity. Solidarity is in the first place a bond of love, a gesture or attitude that a person assumes or a community *vis a vis* of another, with the aim of generating benefits. It is the way through which the community manifests its proper regard towards others and towards the common good. Solidarity is the highest human value since it doesn't require or ask in return any compensation.

Therefore, solidarity as also interdependence are the criteria of the intercultural community life, the weapon of the world-man, of *homo clarianus*.

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New Ways of Mission Today in an Intercultural Reality

1. Interculturality was much spoken about in the 1990s, however as this word lost its novelty..., it began to be put into practice in life, and life was our patient and wise teacher.



Elisabetta Flick

Then “inter-congregation” began to be spoken about as a prophetic way for the future of religious life, and a series of very interesting practical experiences have come and are coming to light. But actually, inter-culturality became a reality long before we were able to understand and interpret it. I think that many Institutes and many of the people here have been in an intercultural situation for years within their own congregations, and probably have a good experience of it, both at the level of intercultural administration, and at the level of formation, community life and mission. This background will help us to initiate dialogue and an exchange of experiences. I have personally experienced international and multicultural community life in Africa, and have practical knowledge of intercultural administration thanks to my two mandates as Superior General, since I belong to an international community.

I well remember the years I was on mission, some thirty years ago, a period in which the need for true inculturation was being felt and demanded a radical change of mindset: 360°.... I was very well aware that it was no longer a question of

exporting the cultural models of the countries we came from: but to promote the development of the local culture. How important it was to recognize the set of values inherent in each culture; the importance of the reciprocal “give and take” ... of the need to be prepared on encountering another culture to welcome the other person and each one’s gifts and wealth, to learn from the other person, not only to teach.... Nevertheless how many years it has taken for this precept to be actually put into practice; how many times have I fallen into the trap of exporting my own standards, my criteria, believing them to be applicable at the universal level, instead of assuming a respectful receptive attitude of listening, open to the local culture and starting from there. (Some examples follow...)

2. Like Christ, impelled by the Cananite woman to widen the horizon of his mission (Mt 15:21-28), we are called to “change places”, to modify our way of seeing things, to move about, to leave our normal position, to renew our outlook and our behavior. The conversion to be lived primarily involves the motion of the heart. It is a matter of letting our life to be called into question, transformed by our relationship with the other person in order to engage in a vital exchange which consists not so much in the ability to give as in the capacity to receive. In this reciprocal exchange, one agrees to submit one’s own criteria of judgement to the criticism of others. In this way one becomes able to recognize the Spirit of God at work in the world and to name the Gospel values present in each culture.

The reflection I should like to suggest to you this morning is based on and renews some of the challenging ideas Fr. Bruno Secondin put forward in his article, entitled: “Vita Consacrata in Europa”.¹

I know that to begin by referring to European situations is biased, but I think that the points proposed here, and which refer directly to Pope Francis’ appeals are addressed to the Church as a whole and to all the Congregations and religious Institutes in the world.

Firstly, it is well to remember that this is not the first nor will it be the last time that religious life has been called to seek and find new paths to carry out mission, in order to respond in an appropriate way to the social and ecclesiastical realities of the time. It suffices to think of the chequered forms religious life has taken over the centuries... but it is not my task to comment on history....

3. In a special way, following the Second Vatican Council the religious congregations had to show they were creative, bold, and trustworthy in order to continue to witness to their fidelity and to their active love of God in the heart of the Church, and in a changing world.

And we are called to believe that, despite our demographic statistics, notwithstanding the decrease in vocations, we are still able today to invent new approaches, because we believe in the power of the Spirit, who, tirelessly, renews all things.

With Pope Francis’ election, this appeal to open new approaches has taken on new vigour and we are invited to review the way in which we witness to the unconditional love of God for each and every one, and more especially for those who are always excluded from our societies.

“We are impelled to reopen the debate on evangelical poverty as a typical ‘form of Ecclesiae’ and as a ‘form of Christ’. We are continually requested, above all, to rediscover the art of drawing near to the

poor and of charity to the least in the context of global indifference” (LC II, n.4).

Pope Francis’ special appeal rings out particularly clearly for our congregations of apostolic life. The religious congregations have done all they possibly could to “*rediscover the art of drawing near to the poor and of charity to the least*” which has taken different forms in history.

Today we are being asked to reinvent this art in an intercultural context in order to meet the challenges of a globalized world that is steadily and increasingly leaving people by the wayside.

4. Two options are being put forward to reinvent the “*art of drawing near to the poor and of charity to the least*” in an intercultural context:

A. A Church which goes forth

5. To live as “*a Church which goes forth*” (n.24) according to Pope Francis means - to dare to break down barriers, while Europe is building walls:

❖ Therefore we must examine ourselves and identify our own mental limitations, those that prevent us from truly going to meet the other person with his/her difference,

❖ Investigate and identify the Congregation’s institutional confines; whatever hinders change; what blinds us and makes us unable to discern the call the Spirit addresses to us from within every culture, and thanks to this survey, in line with the charisms and means available, stay ready and open to accept novelty.

6. To dare to share our resources, skills, members, structures, to launch new projects, not outlined *a priori*, but developed in progress, not projects made over the heads of others, not projects that may be very fine but which reflect our own perspective: but projects set up through dialogue with the other party, that promote the role and dignity of the poor people themselves, projects drawn up together

taking into account the time frame, the space and the set of values of the others. Such boldness requires patient listening over time, dialogue, and much patience, to avoid imposing our methods, criteria of analysis and efficiency, the pace of a given culture, in order to build together, step by step, in mutual respect and communication in order to set out on a common journey. Such boldness, on the one hand, also warns against the temptation to remain anchored to the safety of the *déjà vu*, already done and perhaps even successfully... and on the other, to work to create networks with bodies, structures, institutions... “it is no longer the age of lone navigators”.

7. Work boldly to help the young to integrate, especially those in the most disadvantaged areas, by studying their situation, their dreams, what contribution they can make through their qualities and creative gifts to the common good. Evaluate the contribution their culture can make through a reciprocal exchange of means, by integrating their diversity to bring about a renewed society, one that is more welcoming and human. It is very difficult for the youth of today to imagine a future. Our work must help the young people to plan their future....

I feel sure that you have many suggestions as to how the religious congregations today can take up and respond to the invitation to live as “*a Church which ‘goes forth’*” (n. 24) in a multicultural context.

B. The Practice of Hospitality

8. The second invitation Pope Francis makes is to re-discover the “*art of drawing near to the poor and of charity to the least*” and the invitation is to practise hospitality, “create ‘alternate spaces’ where one can experience the Gospel logic of self-giving, fraternity, embracing difference, of love of one another” (LC II, n. 2).

In a world in which the reception reserved to the foreigner is once again being called into question to the point of

building walls between countries to prevent entry, and where in numerous countries, the person who is “different”, is less and less tolerated, we are called more than ever to witness in a concrete way that, it is not only possible to coexist but that it is actually a fertile source of reciprocal enrichment; without hiding the arduous aspect that conflict and relationship implies and always brings with it.

We are asked to practise hospitality among ourselves, firstly within our communities that are often “multicultural”, ceaselessly questioning ourselves on how we should accept our differences. This reception is the first sign of reciprocal and unconditional love that we can offer. However, we know well that it is not enough to live together in our Houses in order to overcome barriers and reciprocal misunderstanding. The community must assume the responsibility to undertake an on-going conversion, to adopt a new model of coexistence. “The life of ... all the members united together... is to be determined in such a way that it becomes a mutual support for all in fulfilling the vocation of each member” (*Code of Canon Law*, can. 602). *In fact there are many intercultural and multicultural communities, but what is lacking is a reciprocal contemplative outlook, the will to build up the Church together, the commitment to become laboratories of solidary hospitality by networking.*²

There are no ready-made definitions on how to do this. Without doubt each one of you has experiences you could share of life in an international community, some positive and some less so. On reviewing my experience at an intercultural General Council, during my mandate as Superior General, the journey each one of us had to make comes to mind, and at times it was not without a serious inner struggle that one met the other person in her reality, in order to understand the way each one thought and communicated; not to expect uniform patterns of thought, but to respect

each one in her way of being and communicating....

9. In this regard, I remember a particular episode in Japan. I was in Tokyo for an international meeting... at the time the cherry trees were in bloom (*sakura*). The Provincial, who was difficult to understand not only due to the language difference, said she wished to spend some time with me and suggested we went out together. We went to a fine park, full of flowering cherry trees and we sat under a large tree in flower. I waited for the Sister to speak, but she remained silent contemplating the beautiful tree in full bloom. It took me some time to understand the significance of that silence, but I respected it.... We sat there in silence for some two hours and gradually I, too, felt awed by the beauty of that wonderful tree and I almost lost the sense of time passing. Then we rose and returned to the community without exchanging a single word.... Just imagine my surprise when at the next meeting that Sister told everyone that she had had a deep and pacifying communication with me! I have thought about that experience for a very long time and I have learned that communication is not always by word of mouth and reasoning. And that one can enter into harmony through silence and an emotion shared in common, with the deepest respect for the other party.

Starting from this both beautiful and painful experience I think I may say that today what is essential is *“that one feel committed to live reconciled diversity, not as a mere approach of differences, but in “joyful difference”. Making all the factors, aims, initiatives, converge in the projects, as in prayer, through co-responsibility and solidarity....*³

10. We are also invited to practise this hospitality. To work *“concretely in welcoming refugees, drawing near to the poor”* (Pope Francis, *LC II*, n. 4).

In order to put these gestures into practice, we need to pool our resources,

qualifications, personnel, structures, so as to be ready to receive others and offer them hospitality. Such a reception cannot be limited to making an empty space available, but means creating places and creative spaces to allow people in difficulty to become the protagonists, to recover the human dignity they have lost along the way, by exercising their skills and gifts.

It is possible to do this if we are ready to go beyond the security of what we know, to take new paths, ready to run risks, able to turn back ... to reread what has been achieved and experienced, to adjust our sights continually.

For such hospitality to become reality in the present global context a “prophetic” dimension is required: *“a religious must never abandon prophecy” (LC, II, n. 2). This means bravely denouncing forms of egoism and fear; by proposing alternatives to closure, through hospitality which is active compassion, to recover the genial fascinating testimony of our history of hospitality in the joyful, fruitful coexistence of difference.* In regard to this Pope Francis notes: *“this illusion can also be seen in the sinful structures linked to a model of false development based on the idolatry of money, which leads to a lack of concern for the fate of the poor on the part of the wealthier individuals and societies; they close their doors, refusing even to see the poor” (Lenten Message, 2016, n. 3).*⁴

The challenge of today’s world and the Church’s urgent appeals, voiced by Pope Francis, invite us to take on an ever more prophetic dimension of religious life that allows us to be guided by the Spirit on a largely unexplored route of *“fruitful, joyful difference”*, seeking to extrapolate from it, not what divides but what unites us.

I think that we can venture along these new, unexplored routes thanks to the young recruits who are entering religious life. Thinking about them and listening attentively to their experience three observations come to mind:

11. The First Observation

➤ In Europe the new generation of religious developed in “a small number”. These young people have been formed in an inter-congregational and often in an intercultural atmosphere and have fused these two dimensions long ago.

➤ Since elementary school they have learned that they have to live with different cultures in their own country and abroad. They first became familiar with this in their early school days, then at work, and eventually at the Novitiate. All their higher education has catered for “courses” abroad; learning languages is obligatory from early infancy.

➤ Although the migratory phenomenon is not new, today it is taking on particular importance and breadth, because an entire continent is on the move, it has brought about mixed marriages in all strata of the population:

Cultural differences are not a new situation with which the young people come into contact on entering religious life. It is an inter-generational aspect they have had to come to terms with. The integration of cultural differences in daily life is the major evolutionary factor in the last 20 years, and it is a daily experience.

12. The Second Observation

➤ Today means and instruments are available, such as: the media, Facebook, internet, etc., which have greatly facilitated long distance contacts: the World Youth Day (WYD), the World Cup, language courses, all promote bonds of friendship among young people from every country, even on the other side of the globe. Singers and musical groups are made up of musicians from every nationality, and they travel the world creating a global musical culture. The young generation has grown up with globalization and absorbed it.

13. The Third Observation

➤ In the wake of the Second Vatican Council, the Congregations reviewed and up-dated their Constitutions in order to

return to their source, to the charismatic intuition of their respective Founders. This work encouraged each Congregation to rediscover its specificity. Over these years the Congregations studied their differences, their specific *raison d'être*, their way of carrying out their mission, way of life, their charism.

❖ The drop in numbers in most of the Institutes has led to a drawing closer together, to union in some cases.

❖ Perhaps the time has come to seek to cooperate, to join forces for the mission, instead of highlighting the distinctions?

Inter-congregational projects have been started and are coming into being with the intention of opening new approaches to mission in order to answer the current urgent needs (South Sudan Project has been in place for some time now, the Bridge of Hope in Madrid, the emerging projects of the UISG, and of CIMI in Sicily, the joint project planned by the RDC and the Diocese of Noto, Dunquerque/Calais), especially in the field of immigration, in Fukushima, Japan, after the *tsunami*). In order to succeed projects such as these need, as a basis for mission, to overcome forms of difference and specificity that were formally strengthened. Do not say: “it has always been done this way” nor “it cannot be done because we are different”; it can be done precisely because we are different.

What New Missions?

I have thought a lot about what Fr. B Secondin said regarding the “old” forms of mission and service in our Congregations. He referred very clearly and without beating about the bush to the words Pope Francis addressed to religious concerning the new way of living and doing mission. I think it is helpful to quote this in its entirety here:

Consecrated Life has in the diaconate among the poor and weak a glorious history, rich in holiness and prophesy. In the last decade too it has not failed to seek to extend brotherly solidarity and a

diversified and enterprising *diaconia* among the new forms of poverty, in all the peripheries. Perhaps today they may seem less enterprising, but it remains true that this is one of the features that is most admired. If anything it is a question of seeking new goals and new frontiers, exploring anew with assurance among the “leftovers” of history, and among the social outcasts, among the thousand disfigured faces caused by downtrodden dignity.... “The same generosity and self-sacrifice which guided your Founders... must now inspire you... to keep alive the charisms... constantly being enriched and adapted, while losing none of their unique character” (*LC*, II n. 2). “We have to regard ourselves as sealed, even branded, by this mission of bringing light, blessing” (*Evangelii Gaudium*, n. 273).

Every form of *work* stands as a glorious testimony to your history; the result of a tireless capacity to roll up your sleeves and get down to things first-hand, run risks, create ways to heal and free, bring human advancement and Gospel closeness. The various *sores* of the least have often served as *arrow slits* to see further and more broadly, and they have given rise to forms of *diaconia*, ways to alert the distracted to the many forms of injustice, to offer the balm of solidarity and tenderness, dignity and hope to those who have known neither respect nor brotherhood.

14. The crisis of our “*works of mercy*” — so numerous and historically important, even for the history of civilization — is raising a serious problem for the future. We feel the ground slipping from under our feet, because by virtue of them we felt we had dignity and the right to exist, to feel as Church, to deserve rights and prove our usefulness.

Their disappearance takes with it a certain form of consecrated life, an ecclesial model with its history of charity, of service, of enterprise also female and this sends us all into tilt. Have we perhaps confused the witness of charity with the

organisation of “burdensome social services”? Many have transferred that model, by now worn and out of focus in the West — where it came into being and was developed — to other less developed places. But even there sooner or later it will be out of date: not so much because the works of mercy lose their usefulness but because the standardized model is no longer valid. New models must be invented to answer the new needs, take up the new challenges, the new emergencies: but also in synergy with the new forms of co-responsibility, new availability.

Let us not be reduced to maintaining what we are doing in a short-sighted, administrative way. Indeed, Pope Francis says: “I ask you to work concretely in welcoming refugees, drawing near to the poor, and finding creative ways to catechize, to proclaim the Gospel and to teach others how to pray. Consequently, I would hope that structures can be streamlined, large religious houses repurposed for works which better respond to the present demands of evangelization and charity, and apostolates adjusted to new needs” (II, n. 4). This concept is very realistic and in line with the initial invitation to “create ‘alternate spaces’ where the Gospel approach of self-giving, fraternity, embracing differences, and love of one another can thrive” (II, n. 2).⁵

Let us look at the international, inter-congregational project set up in Sicily.

I am aware that my testimony on intercultural mission is partial, or rather very limited, in time and in space.

15. What I shall say actually stems from a very small experience, in embryo, but precisely because of this carefully sifted, so that the seed scattered may bear fruit in good time, and we know well that, as the Gospel also says ... the seed scattered grows, almost without our knowledge: “*The Kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed upon the ground, and should sleep and rise night and day, and the seed*

should sprout and grow, he knows not how" (Mk 4:26-29), and we also know, as St Paul says in his Letter to the Corinthians: *"I planted, Appollos watered, but God gave the growth"* (I Cor 3:6-9).

16. As you certainly know, the Executive Committee of the UISG (International Union of Superiors General) had expressed a wish, that we could define in a certain sense as a dream: which was to make a meaningful gesture to mark the 50th anniversary of its foundation, that will be celebrated this year, and involve the Superiors General belonging to the Union.

Pope Francis' appeal after the first of many shipwrecks off the coast of Lampedusa, and the pressing request of some religious belonging to the Justice and Peace Group of the UISG, were the point of departure for identifying and building up the "Migrant Project", an inter-cultural and inter-congregational project, that aims to serve as a "bridge" between the local population and the migrant population landing in Sicily.

17. For about one year we have been working on the "migrant" project and four months ago the dream of the Executive Committee came true. But, in fact, it is still a tiny reality... the "baby" is taking its first steps, not without difficulty, but with enthusiasm, in two directions, within the community and beyond. Within it, it is a question of studying the personal and community level in order to build two inter-congregational communities. Instead beyond it, means working to construct a net-work in the framework of Sicily, with the population and with the organizations, civil and Church, Italian and foreign, working in the area in order to succeed in contacting the world of the migrants so as to put ourselves at their service, in a simple humble way, not mediatic, in those areas not covered by the institutional structures, by being particularly close to those who are considered to be the "leftovers" (EG, n. 53) to be thrown away.

To the extent that the two communities learn to live in an inter-congregational and inter-cultural way internally, despite all the challenges and difficulties, they will be qualified not only to enter into contact with the migrants landing in Sicily, but they will be able to coexist and understand the foreigners they meet, communicate with them, appreciate and share their cultural values and respective cultures. As these people come from different countries and continents: Pakistan, Bangladesh, Afghanistan, the Middle East, North Africa and Sub-Saharan Africa, this will be a source of enrichment, not for them alone but for the population that receives them.

18. The Good News can be proclaimed to them that it is possible to live together, work together, though of a different skin colour, language, charisms, because they are united by the same mission with a common passion for God and for humanity. In Sicily this silent witness can become a strong and encouraging message as well as an invitation to believe that the experience of Pentecost can still be active and present in today's reality.

19. Ten Sisters from different countries: Argentina, Ethiopia, Eritrea, France, India, Italy, Poland, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, members of seven different Congregations, are learning to measure up to the different cultures coexisting in the Sicilian culture, which is also totally new to them. Indeed, it is completely different from that of their respective countries. These Sisters consider that they too are migrants in a foreign land ... but precisely this experience, lived first-hand, is the first step towards true integration and a more authentic knowledge of the reality lived by the thousands of brothers and sisters who have come in search of a more dignified and more human life. They have put themselves at the service of those who land on the soil of Sicily with greater awareness and sensitivity to their suffering and weariness, because they have personally

experienced what it means to be a stranger or guest who is, at times, unwanted, or merely tolerated.

The passion for God and for humanity is their reason for being together. The common mission enlivens them and helps them to undertake with creativity arduous, totally unknown paths and leads them to invent new and different approaches, and to bravely face the inevitable difficulties, even the suspicion of the people towards all that is new and different.

20. They are moved by the conviction that, still today, God feels compassion before the misery of his people. He asks them to lend him their hands, to embrace and console, support... he asks them to lend him their feet to tirelessly travel the roads to go to meet whoever is not welcomed, who has lost the way, to walk hand in hand with those who no longer have the energy to walk alone, infusing them with courage to continue the journey and begin to hope once more.

This conviction is what the Sisters are experiencing in Sicily. It seems to me that this is a call addressed to us to work harder to build communion day by day between one and all, and more particularly to our different congregations and religious families. We all bear hope and our respective charisms could be mutually enriching had we but the courage and boldness to cross the confines of our Congregations to answer the appeals of the world with missionary projects: common projects in which we could share our human and spiritual resources to the best advantage.

21. Today we live in a world that has passed from the "mono-": monoculture to the "multi- or inter-": inter-national, inter-cultural, inter-relational inter-religious dialogue, inter-congregation. In such a world, full of risks and the unknown, no one, no institution, no congregation can pretend to build the future with its own strength alone. But this construction needs

to experience with courage and humble patience the encounter with the Truth, through dialogue, listening, pooling our common resources and mutual help.

I should just like to bring some points to your attention which derives from the observations of these Sisters in Sicily, in order to live inter-cultural life daily.

22. These points are an invitation to start to examine oneself and above all to let God work in us instead of thinking that it is first of all the others who have to change.

A. Always consider that difference is wealth and not a barrier. The problem is not in the difference of the other person, most often it is in oneself. It is I who feel uneasy on meeting a culture different from my own, and my character has difficulty in accepting to live, think, express myself in unfamiliar ways.

B. A good way would be to create joint projects and build the future together. We need to be careful to plan projects and to build the future together. To live together we need to set up a "federate" project in the conviction that each one needs the other, that "no one can go it alone".

We need to plan the project together; to dream together, to tackle common needs, share our worries in order to build together. Thus, each person contributes, day by day, in a large or small way, to the development of the plan, starting from small, simple routine gestures. Through this reciprocal exchange we are mutually enriched.

C. Learn from experience rather than advice, and allow oneself to be helped or guided.

Make no mistake, daily international and inter-cultural life is difficult, humanly speaking, almost impossible. It could happen that some people are too frail to handle these difficulties and win through. In this case they should not be penalized but accompanied and helped without criticism to recover their balance in another context where they can give of their best.

What helped the group to form was the period of formation prior to their arrival in Sicily. In that period they lived together and reviewed their life and learned to analyse what they had experienced. This was made possible thanks to supportive community and personal help.

Language sometimes represents a trap due to the lack of a common idiom – one must try to identify a form of communication that does not depend on words. One should let symbols speak, nevertheless, in the long term it is essential to have a common language to facilitate reflection; a form of expression everyone can understand.

Respect for Differences

This is a huge difficulty that is unending. To respect differences does not mean indifference, just letting each person do as he or she pleases provided it does not bother one too much. I think that to truly embrace with an open, generous heart different methods, ways of doing things, different ways of praying, different eating habits, is to receive God's gift. It enables one to renew the way one views the world and humanity, while revealing an as yet unknown face of God. To truly welcome the other person in his/her difference and believe that one is accepted to the same extent, demands a slow, docile self-transformation that is on-going.

Inter-culturality as a new paradigm of Mission

23. Only by accepting multi-culturality positively as an undeniable fact of the modern age and by adopting inter-culturality as our lifestyle, will we be able to discover a new paradigm for mission work. If, previously, everything was based on the goodwill of each individual imbued with his/her own culture and set of values, today this perspective is no longer enough. Today a change of paradigm, a new style, based on inter-culturality is necessary.

The change of epoch we are experiencing with its burden of complexity marked by:

the dissolving of social relationships, reducing a person to his/her potential output and cost, as someone to exploit and exchange, forms of violence and the on-going rejection of whoever is different, viewed as a threat, call for the elaboration of a new paradigm for global life, a new grammar of civil coexistence, essentially based on the recognition of the importance of the other person, of his/her diversity as a source of enrichment, of the inalienable dignity that exists in each one. To achieve this, it is no longer a question of changing one's mental outlook, as was thought previously, but one must create "a new mindset" (*EG*, n. 188) open to change.

This inversion of route can only be possible if we set out to approach the other person, as an outgoing wayfarer, who through the other person becomes able to discover his/her own identity, through dialogue, exchange, coexistence. To study his own hermeneutic, man needs the other person. In this perspective, diversity may be regarded as a gift and a resource, not as a threat.⁶

This presupposes the ability to put into practice and to harmoniously co-ordinate a number of factors, abilities and other interior and exterior attitudes in order to complete a determined task effectively.⁷

24. This method, by means of the inter-cultural approach, aims to bring about an experience lived as a personal process of transformation through comparison with another person, and this process cannot be entrusted to the goodwill of the people involved alone. This is a dynamic process that takes place in daily life according to Marc Thomas, who states that: inter-cultural life is learned just as a human being learned to walk: thanks to experience and the risks taken as they come. The inter-cultural lesson is not simply learned by the transmission of didactic knowledge, nor by emulating the behaviour of others, but by trial and error. Thus, the learner, channeled by a good "guide", mutates into him/

herself and acquires the knowledge and skills needed.⁸

In other words inter-cultural skills can be defined as the ability that allows one to grasp and simultaneously analyse a situation when people and groups from different cultural backgrounds come into contact; the ability to manage these situations: actually, the ability to take one's distance from the situation of cultural confrontation in which one is involved, in order to be able to interpret and understand what is at stake here, in order to facilitate this process.⁹

25. Thus, we could say that to acquire this ability requires a continuous learning process that in turn calls the person into question at three existential levels: personal cultural identity, knowledge of the other person, how to manage the relationship.

The inter-cultural element is vital for the future of religious life and for mission. What it calls for is an ongoing process which demands intercultural synergy whenever one undertakes a journey that can harmoniously combine the personal identity and the relationship with the other person.

We must not forget that it is people who come into contact, not merely their cultural background or national identity. This means that the inter-cultural relationship is both simultaneous and interpersonal. It puts each person's identity and social standing at stake at the intercultural level too, and brings out their cultural differences, which result in a series of reactions and particular attitudes on the part of the individuals who come into contact.

26. The encounter with the other person, different from me, always represents unknown factors that need to be clarified, which may instill fear, at times result in antipathy or the assumption of an uncompromising position. Therefore this encounter entails some risks that may be

addressed and studied together if, instead of adopting a defensive attitude, we choose to enter into dialogue and receptive listening; if we agree to share our resources, help each other. This way calls for courage, but also for patience and humility, nevertheless good will is not enough, not even by employing a series of techniques aimed to answer the difficulties of life.

The great challenge continues to be how to qualify people to fill intercultural positions?

Some practical suggestions:¹⁰

- study one's own identity in order to discover one's own frame of reference through a process of discernment

- approach the other person in order to understand one's own frame of reference and then interact with the difference;

- start a dialogue to reappraise the relationship in order to build up fraternity as the epiphany of communion.

27. So many doors can open before us, but one must be attentive to the breath of the Spirit who helps one to have the courage and boldness of our respective Founders, according to the charisms and power we have and especially not to be afraid to dream and to fly high.

In this year in which the Church has invited us to let ourselves be touched by God's Mercy, perhaps we are invited to give proof of mercy firstly to ourselves and to ask God to teach us, day by day, how to advance, even by taking little steps, maybe even backwards at times, in order to be disciples of Christ together who know no boundaries to love which calls us, today more than ever, through Pope Francis' words, to leave our limited frontiers behind and to go forward to meet each and every one to witness to God's mercy and infinite love for each person, without exception.

End Notes:

¹ Bruno Secondin, Sfide attuali della VC in Europa, in *Testimoni*, 4 aprile 2016

² cf. Articolo n° 6, 2 *Laboratorio d'interculturalità*.

³ idem

⁴ *Messaggio per la Quaresima 2016*.

⁵ *Sfide attuali della vita consacrata in Europa* In *Testimoni*, n° 4,2

⁶ Dal documento dei Missionari della Consolata “*L'interculturalità come nuovo paradigma della missione*”, 13 gennaio 2014

⁷ Cf. Pellerey Michèle, In Prellezso, J.M. – Nanni C. – Malizia G. Ed. *Dizionario di scienze dell'educazione*, Roma, LAS 2008

⁸ Thomas Marc : *Acquérir une compétence interculturelle. Au quotidien, processus d'apprentissages interculturels. Des processus d'apprentissages interculturels au quotidien*. Mémoire de DESS in Psychologie, Nancy 2000, in <http://www.médiation-interculturelle.com>

⁹ Flye Saint Marie Anne, *La compétence interculturelle dans le domaine de l'intervention éducative et sociale*, in *Les cahiers de l'Actif* (1997) 250/251, 1,55

¹⁰ Da Martha Seide, *Instituts religieux et Société de Via Apostolique dans les exigences interculturelles. Approfondissement et pratiques de vie*. Atelier sull'interculturalità, nell'incontro Vita consacrata in unità, 29 gennaio 2016.

*Translated from Italian
by: Philippa Wooldridge*

*The original version of this article is
available on our website:
www.sedosmission.org*

PANEL: Sharing of Experiences of Interaction with Cultures



Katirisca Kahindo, Maria José Merodio, Jerosin Kattar

Maria José Rey-Merodio, MCR

Cari confratelli e consorelle, mi è stato chiesto di condividere la mia esperienza, di donna consacrata, nel lavoro con gli immigrati e rifugiati qui a Roma.

Dal 2008 lavoro al Centro Astalli, Servizio dei Gesuiti per i Rifugiati. Dopo 7 anni di impegno nei progetti che si svolgono nelle scuole, ora coordino il progetto di accoglienza dei rifugiati nelle congregazioni religiose. Il resto del tempo lo dedico a un progetto di evangelizzazione ed educazione che con le mie consorelle e insieme ai Salesiani di Don Bosco svolgo nella Basilica del Sacro Cuore. È il *Progetto Missionario Sacro Cuore: Un'esperienza di Risurrezione per i giovani del mondo*, che ha come destinatari principali i giovani italiani e stranieri, specialmente i rifugiati, di età compresa tra i 16 e i 30 anni.

Prima di entrare nel nucleo di quest'esperienza, vorrei condividere con voi qualcosa del mio primo contatto diretto con una cultura diversa dalla mia. Sono stati i miei primi anni missionari fuori dall'Argentina. Dall'età di 20 anni ho

vissuto, per quasi 8 anni, in Cile. Lì, l'immigrata, in terra straniera, ero io. Il confronto con la propria cultura è venuto spontaneo e ho imparato a mettere in discussione me stessa, maturando l'idea di una "cultura di Vangelo" che deve trasformare dal di dentro i criteri, i modi di pensare e di vivere di ogni popolo, compreso il mio. Ho apprezzato lo sviluppo di valori che nella mia cultura di origine erano meno evidenti.

A questo proposito, mi viene in mente un'immagine di quei primi anni di vita missionaria: *Mosè*, a cui viene chiesto di togliersi i sandali di fronte al rovelo ardente perché il luogo sul quale sta è una terra santa (cfr.

Es 3,5). Imparare ad amare persone di una cultura differente e a ridimensionare le espressioni della mia terra di origine sono il frutto che mi porto di quegli anni in Cile, per quello che riguarda la mia missione con giovani di cultura diversa dalla mia. Alla fine del 2004 sono stata inviata come "missionaria in Italia per lavorare con i giovani italiani, specialmente gli universitari".

Ma la situazione in Italia si mostrava diversa da come mi era stata presentata e da come io l'avevo immaginata. Mi sono trovata io, latinoamericana, straniera in Europa, inviata come missionaria per lavorare pastoralmente con i giovani italiani, ma in un contesto di incrocio tra diverse culture e religioni, soprattutto il Cristianesimo e l'Islam. L'avventura si presentava entusiasmante, e questi 11 anni di vita missionaria in Italia sono apparsi più illuminanti di quanto avrei immaginato.

Il vissuto in Italia non è solo di contatto con un'altra cultura, cioè quella italiana, ma con molte persone di provenienze diverse e quindi una cultura particolare, perché si sviluppa a contatto e in confronto con tante altre. Oggi vivere a Roma ci colloca in un contesto interculturale e interreligioso. Tra i giovani che frequentano il Centro Giovanile del Sacro Cuore, ad esempio, possiamo contare quasi 25 Paesi di provenienza diversa e tra di loro, cattolici, ortodossi, protestanti, musulmani e non credenti.

Il primo passaggio che ho dovuto fare è stata *la conoscenza, l'ascolto, l'imparare*. Innanzitutto, dell'Italia. Ho chiesto ai giovani italiani di prestarmi libri di storia, di farmi sentire la musica che ascoltavano loro, di guardare insieme dei film italiani... Poi ho capito che vivere a Roma e lavorare con i giovani voleva dire anche cercare su internet la cartina geografica e individuare i Paesi di provenienza di tanti altri giovani. Pensate che io non avevo mai parlato in vita mia con una persona africana! Né con un musulmano! Non avevo avuto contatto diretto con ortodossi, né sapevo distinguere un marocchino da un bengalese... Con umiltà, molto rispetto e una certa curiosità mi sono fatta raccontare la storia dei loro Paesi, ho visto foto e ascoltato la loro musica, ho partecipato a feste organizzate da loro, ho trascorso molto tempo condividendo le cose a cui loro davano importanza... e ho commesso anche tanti errori!

In questo cammino di conoscenza ho imparato anche che ogni cultura ha delle sensibilità diverse e a volte interpreta uno stesso gesto in modo differente. Ho capito che il rapporto uomo-donna, il contatto fisico, la distanza nello spazio, il modo di vestirsi, di mangiare, di rapportarsi con Dio variano a seconda della cultura e della religione. Per capire tanti rifugiati, mi sono messa a studiare le basi dell'islam, *ho fatto amicizia* con donne e uomini dell'Africa e dell'Asia, pochi cattolici, altri ortodossi e tanti musulmani.

Il Progetto Missionario Sacro Cuore, voleva essere una risposta missionaria, di annuncio di Gesù, di servizio ai più poveri, rispondendo alla sete di verità che ogni giovane si porta nel cuore. E non abbiamo voluto escludere nessuno: né gli italiani, né i rifugiati. Non volevamo *entrare in contatto* con le diverse culture né con le diverse religioni, ma *con persone concrete*.

In terra europea si respira un forte clima di secolarizzazione. La frase: "meglio una carità operosa che una verità schiacciante" rappresenta perfettamente la cultura predominante dove il relativismo è fortemente diffuso e il solo nominare la parola "verità" suscita rifiuto da parte di tanti. In questo contesto, interculturale, interreligioso, relativista e secolarizzato, una domanda è emersa in me e mi ha messo in crisi: che vuol dire essere "missionaria"? Evangelizzare solo i giovani italiani, per la maggior parte battezzati ma non più credenti? Sono missionaria solo per i cattolici? E missionaria per questi altri? Ai primi "l'annuncio di Gesù" e agli altri, "la carità silenziosa"? Chi sono io? Che senso ha dire che Gesù è il Salvatore del mondo? Di tutti? Tutti, tutti? Anche di Ahmed, scappato dal Darfur? Anche di Osman, rifugiato somalo, che mi chiamava la sera per raccontarmi alcuni dei suoi sbagli, il suo senso di colpa e il desiderio di andare in moschea per pregare Dio? Loro sarebbero più felici se conoscessero il Signore Gesù? Annunciare è sinonimo di fare violenza alla coscienza dell'altro?

Evangelizzare è sinonimo di proselitismo? Accoglienza è quindi sinonimo di non parlare di Gesù? E se crediamo che nell'incontro con il Signore Risorto si trova la Vita Vera, allora come parlare di Lui? Queste domande esigevano una risposta, senza la quale il nostro essere missionari non aveva più un valore. Noi abbiamo scelto un punto di partenza diverso da quello a cui ci costringe la cultura dominante. A noi non interessa sapere chi ha più ragione. Non dividiamo il mondo tra i cristiani e i non cristiani. Per noi *il punto di partenza sono i giovani stessi*. Ogni giovane che arriva a casa nostra è un figlio amato di Dio. Ogni persona è una coscienza che cerca la verità. E la verità non è un insieme di idee. La verità non è il nome di una religione. La Verità è una Persona, Gesù. E con questa certezza, andiamo loro incontro, con una nostra identità chiara, e gli vogliamo bene, così come sono. Gratuitamente. Sono per noi figli dello stesso Padre. Sono per noi, uomini e donne assetati di amore. E con molto rispetto, li accompagniamo nelle loro ricerche e nei loro bisogni, sapendo che non esiste un'esperienza di amore che non abbia la sorgente nell'unica fonte d'Amore vero: Gesù, morto e risorto per la nostra salvezza.

L'esperienza di questi anni, le centinaia di giovani di diversi Paesi che sono passati e che frequentano casa nostra, le diverse attività portate avanti dai giovani stessi (corso di italiano, di informatica, orientamento al lavoro, attività di aggregazione giovanile, incontri di confronto tra il cristianesimo e l'islam su diverse tematiche, incontri attorno alla Parola di Dio, adorazione al Santissimo...) ci interpellano nel nostro modo di essere missionari e ci confermano nel nostro agire quando giovani tanto diversi ci dicono che qui hanno trovato innanzitutto una "casa" e una "famiglia". È il nostro desiderio che prima o dopo scoprano il segreto di questo essere "famiglia": l'essere figli di un solo Padre.

Jerosin Kattar, *Parish Priest*

Dear Sisters and Brothers..

VANAKKAM, NAMASKAR,

GOOD MORNING, BUON GIORNO.

I hail from India well-known for its ancient civilization of Sindhu Valley, with age old Sanskrit literature.

I come from Tamilnadu, and Tamil our mother tongue, is an ancient and classic language at par with Greek and Latin. GITANJALI of Rabindranath Tagore in the North and THIRUKKURAL in the South are only a sample of our Cultural heritage lived and expressed in its fullness. These books as some more like these, have inculcated human, humane values and are still non-drying Springs of Inspiration, enthusiasm and encouragement to the youth and to all in India and in the World on multi-cultural life .

1. UNITY IN DIVERSITY

In India we have 29 states , nearly twenty proper languages and hundreds of ethnic groups. Our country is a beautiful mosaic of varied cultures, traditions, languages and Nationalities. Each one is unique yet open to the other. Myself being born in a multi -ethnic-cultural-religious context, I have been blessed with qualities like openness, understanding and accepting others as they are with their own backgrounds and perspectives. In our village, we cherish a close and personal relationship among us, coming from different cultural setups .This relationship is not formal nor peripheral but deep as members of one and the same family.

The 90% of our schooling, right from the Kindergarten level up to the university contribute to learn in appreciating unity in the diversity of creed, color, caste and culture.

Inter-religious experiences like celebrations of common festivals ordinarily lay a strong foundation for a pacific multicultural living –together. Inter-religious prayers held in schools and

villages always focus the attention of students and people to search for common grounds for a harmonious, communal living. We have also some serious problems like deeply rooted casteism, religious and linguistic fanaticism, which upset the life of the commoners now and then. This is very often, due to the narrow, selfish and crooked mind of the political and religious fanatics, resulting in communal disharmony and social disorder, in spite of the ordinary people's desire for a continuous harmony and pacific co-habitation.

As a National and Asian Chaplain of the Youth and students, I have been very much impressed by the deep desire and willing involvement of so many youngsters and students in promoting Communal harmony and social integration.. The experience with the youth also has shaped my personal vision of life. As a Pastor in the villages, I have been enthused to feel that I am a pastor not only to Catholic population but also to non-Catholic and non-Christian peoples in my parish-territory. In fact many Hindu and Muslim families would invite me happily for their family events like birth, death, sickness, marriage etc. and would freely approach me for any guidance, and help.

2. DEEP SENSE OF SPIRITUALITY

India being a cradle of various Religions like Hinduism, with its branches, Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism etc. welcoming Islam and Christianity in its fold, breathes in and out an air of deep religiosity and spirituality. Basically the spiritual sense is very remarkable in the mind of common and uneducated people, without ruling out of course, fatalism. eccentricism and superstitions, in some cases. Perhaps poverty and illiteracy too cause this. Vast majority live a simple contented life with great piety and routine devotions. Very often the religious events bring all the people of the villages to come together and feel as one family. I have

learnt from Ordinary Hindu women how to be open to the faith of other religions. When I was Pastor in a big Shrine of Our Lady of Snows in Tuticorin, scores of non-Christian would meet and express their strong belief in Jesus, Mary and St Antony.. sometimes stronger than the catholics. These factors also have shaped the patterns of my thinking and behavior as a human and religious person.

3. SPIRIT OF DIALOGUE

The multi-faceted elements of Indian culture have always promoted a Spirit of Dialogue. Personally I am convinced that through “ DIALOGUE”, we can solve unimaginable issues of Families and Societies. Whenever I came across a misunderstanding, confrontation and confusion, I have adapted a persisting Dialogue to sort out and solve or succeed. Example of good leaders like Mahatma Gandhi, Ambedkar, Mother Theresa, Dr Kalam, in the social and religious arena, have mooted and formed thousands of people like me to engage in dialogue at all costs.

4. FAMILY

(Its values, relationships and traditions)

Myself coming from a “small” family of 14 children, from a lower middle class and traditional family. It is here that I learnt at first how to understand, accept others and adjust myself with one another and do sacrifice for others. Larger families and Joint-Families are one of the common factors in Indian society, though in some parts of the country it has started to decline. This family atmosphere has helped from early childhood to enjoy and look for interpersonal and intrapersonal rapport in the society. In the Indian Church, Programs of forming Basic Christian communities and Neighborhood Communities, Peace and Harmony committees are taken up to live up the family spirit in the context of Catholic

Faith. I have animated 30 basic Communities in my parish for 5 years, which has strengthened the healthy family values and relationships and traditions.

5. CHARISM OF COMMUNION

Personally, I have learnt this from the *Association of the Holy Family of Bordeaux*, in which I am a Priest Associate for more than 15 years. **Fostering a deeper communion** among ourselves as priests, between the 5 branches of the association, among the members of the Church and between the peoples of the world's civil society and among the creations of the whole universe (Our Common Home) at large. I have been imbibed with a strong spirit of inclusiveness (not to exclude). We are all a **Family on a Mission** to form, nurture and protect the larger Family of God, which is the Kingdom of God on Earth. You all will agree with no exception that the true spirit of Communion is an atom bomb against any/all forms of division and destruction in the Church and in the Society.

DIFFICULTIES AND CHALLENGES I HAVE MET

1. Isolation and Loneliness.. is one of the challenges in my pastoral ministry in Europe which I try to overcome with good interactions, house visits, Jesus' table ministry, (Sharing meals in homes) and spending leisure time in Bars and Piazzas with people with voluntary sharing.

2. jealousy, non -acceptance, subtle shadow of racism (superiority complex) and Prejudice. For this I try to make myself transparent, sociable and understanding.

3. Communication problems. Understanding the mentality of the Westerner is difficult and to accept it is very tough for me a poor Indian(!) Sometimes I am unable to express adequately what all I want to communicate. I have to make more efforts in this regard.

SOME IMPORTANT ISSUES UNABLE TO DIGEST... PERSONALLY

Some issues like:

1. Concept of Freedom.
2. Immorality and promiscuity.
3. Predominant Clericalism in the Catholic Church.
4. Exaggerated level of Consumerism/ Consumism and enormous Wastage (food and materials).
5. Tendency to be an American Xerox.

I find very difficult to digest. I need to understand these issues without prejudice, in the light of the Gospel.

To Conclude, Each Culture is a Gift from the Good Lord not only to a specific group but to be cherished and lived by the whole humanity. No culture is high or low. Each one is unique. It's given for a happy and wholistic life of each individual and all members of the Great Human Family of God.

Filo Shizue Hirota, MMB

I am not going to say anything new but this is going to be a simple sharing of my experience of having lived in Japan, the US, Bolivia, the Philippines, Mexico, Nicaragua, Spain and Italy.



A. Call

By now at this seminar, it is very clear that interculturality is the way to live our life and mission in today's world. We said that it is the future, the prophecy and an obligation. As congregation, we need to

have a common discernment process to confirm this call for interculturality.

1. By re-reading the founding charism of our congregation contemplating on **the reality of today's world and our reality as Congregation.**

2. The Signs of the Times in the 21st century definitely indicate the reality of a world which is broken, hurt, divided in many ways.

3. The important question we ask ourselves is: What is our message based on Jesus and his gospel to this divided world?

We reflect on the Signs of the Times in light of the truth about ourselves as "relations and interconnectedness". Our being interconnected is a sign of who we are as the image of God. Pope Francis speaks of our interconnectedness in *Laudato Si*.

4. **The reality of Consecrated Life** in today's world is becoming more and more multicultural.

5. We need to **believe and be deeply convinced** of our mission in today's world as a mission of uniting, reconciling, building bridges in order to enable universal brother/sisterhood. Our multiculturalism is a call at this time to live our mission and community life being a witness of communion and inclusion: of interculturality.

B. Some basic attitudes needed to live in a multicultural reality which I have learned:

1. Can I really accept her/him as he/she is? Or am I almost always conscious of the fact that the person is a Chinese, Zambian

or Mexican? Or am I accepting the person as my brother/sister who has her/his history, background, personality, and happens to be a Chinese, Zambian or Mexican? This difference is important. The reason I insist on this is that we should never draw any **judgment** about a person because of her culture or ethnicity. She is like that because she is a Chinese... In other words, racial/ethnic generalization is always a hindrance to live genuine, interpersonal relationships.

2. Another important aspect is that we should not identify one's ethnicity because of her/his physical characteristics. I have been told many times, "I know you are a Japanese because of your eyes." Again, any generalization does not help our interpersonal relationships.

3. In a situation of conflict, we have to look at each person in an integrated and holistic way. One's personality and culture cannot be separated. If we focus exclusively on one's culture, however, the conflict transformation would become very complicated and messy. We cannot say, "The cause of the conflict is that she is a Chinese."

4. Much reflection is needed so that any formative process in a multicultural reality could be a positive help. It is **necessary** to have a space of sharing about each one's experience which is reflected and prayed individually in this challenging reality.

- What puzzles me? What annoys me? What questions me? Why? What is this experience telling me about myself? It also helps to have tools to understand and appreciate different cultures present
- some inputs about the historical background of a culture
- some help to experience a culture: music, dance, arts, etc.



5. Languages:

Each language is a world. It would be interesting and helpful to hear how the experience of the sisters when they have to speak a language which is not their own. What are the experiences, challenges, some insights about the languages/culture?

6. Strong culture and not strong culture (vulnerable, weak, soft, flexible, ambiguous..). Clarity and ambiguity.

Clarity is important in some cultures while in others not. For example, in my Japanese culture ambiguity is more appreciated. We appreciate the beauty of ambiguity like spring haze. In my culture, silence is very important. Less words could be more appreciated than many words. On the other hand, there are cultures that appreciate clarity more. In those cultures clarity is identified as sincerity, honesty, integrity while ambiguity is “judged” as a lack of honesty or transparency. A person from this kind of culture could be judged as a liar. There are different ways of saying Yes and No. In my Japanese culture, we try to avoid to pronounce a clear NO.

7. There is another important experience that would help interculturality. We need a meaningful interpersonal experience to live humanizing, Spirit led and Spirit filled relationships. We are all the same human beings. We are the same in many different ways. This experience of being different and same is important and needed to enable us to accept my sister/brother as she/he is. We need to have an experience of this fundamental deep common humanity in our interpersonal relationships. What kind of religious life are we envisioning? What kind of human being do we want to be? What is the profile of a young woman joining us? And how this vision could be reflected in our life, community, ministries, leadership structure... from here we could draw out a plan for our formation.

“Observing nature, we see that diversity is essential to balance, wholeness, and resilience.

Ecosystems thrive when a variety of species of plants and animals nourish each other. Diverse environments are much stronger and less susceptible to pests and disease than mono-crop fields. The world is a relational system full of complex interdependence among very different creatures. If we want sustainable communities, we must always welcome the "other" and learn to see our neighbor as ourselves.”

Richard Rohr, OFM

Mercedes Leticia Casas Sánchez, FSpS

Interculturalidad y dinámicas de misión desde mi experiencia en la CLAR



Mercedes Leticia Casas Sánchez

Cuando el P. Arlindo me pidió que compartiera esta reflexión con ustedes le dije que no había profundizado antes en este tema. Pero me dijo: “comparte desde tu experiencia en la CLAR”, y eso me animó. Realmente al elaborar esta sencilla reflexión se me venían a la mente y al corazón tantas hermanas y hermanos que van haciendo un camino de interculturalidad en América Latina y el Caribe, camino que tal vez no está consignado por escrito, pero que sí está haciendo latir algo nuevo en el corazón de nuestra VC. Hermanas y hermanos viviendo en la inserción, compartiendo la fe y la vida en la diversidad cultural, asumiendo rostros nuevos, miradas nuevas, palabras nuevas, corazones nuevos. *Los he visto, oído, tocado...* en estos casi siete años de caminar en la CLAR.

Me he encomendado mucho al Espíritu Santo, el especialista en pluralismos, en unidad en la diversidad, en comunión, y me iluminó para buscar en teólogos que escriben especialmente desde Latinoamérica y el Caribe y que tienen una

estrecha relación con la CLAR; teólogos que conozco y aprecio mucho y en los que he fundamentado este compartir, especialmente en el P. José María Arnáiz, marianista, y el P. Roberto Tomichá, franciscano conventual.

Sé que aquí todas y todos son expertos en este tema sobre todo porque lo viven, y sé que en algunas cosas me darán la razón y en otras tendrán mucho que enseñarme.

Interculturalidad

Nuestra vida es fruto de la interculturalidad¹. Es una de las características de la cultura actual que es global y por tanto intercultural. Supone pensar globalmente y actuar localmente donde se encuentran las culturas diversas.

La interculturalidad implica aceptar la diversidad de culturas. Esta diversidad lleva a la interculturalidad. “Comienza cuando una persona, por la razón que sea, cambia su contexto habitual de vida y entra en relación con otras personas o grupos de culturas distintas a la suya”.²

Implica también reciprocidad, interrelación. Supone un movimiento de querer entender y querer ser entendido.³

Las culturas son complementarias. Esa complementariedad no se hace y se logra a partir de la uniformidad sino de la diversidad. Esa diversidad lleva a la riqueza cultural.

De hecho todas las realidades humanas son interculturales; no son monoculturales.

¹ Cfr.: OCHOA, José Miguel, *Interculturalidad y Vida Consagrada*, <http://documents.mx/documents/intercultural-id-ad-y-vida-a.html>

² Idem

³ Idem

La diversidad viene del género, del origen, de la historia, del lugar, del grupo generacional, de la diversidad biológica, de los valores, de la geografía y la historia, del trabajo o profesión.

La Iglesia ha tendido a ser mono cultural y sin embargo ha caminado, también, hacia un trabajo multicultural, en distintos lugares y para distintos grupos de personas.

La interculturalidad hay que vivirla como una riqueza. Más de una vez se ha vivido como un problema.

No es un término fácil de definir, pero si ha nacido de un esfuerzo por juntar lo local y lo global.

Después del Concilio Vaticano II el tema del pluralismo se acercó a la Iglesia y a la Vida Consagrada. El pluralismo está en la base de una adecuada noción de la interculturalidad.

Misión

La misión es un proceso de evangelización, que pasa por creyentes y no creyentes, por comunidades cristianas, por la Iglesia, por las culturas. Uno de los grandes desafíos de la misión de la VC es la interculturalidad. Todos somos objetos de misión.⁴

La Iglesia no existe sin misión, es su razón de ser. Nace de la Trinidad. “Es el permanente diálogo del Dios-Trinidad con la humanidad”.⁵

Somos “discípulos y misioneros” como dice el Documento de Aparecida. La misión no es una actividad, sino nuestro ser: “ser memoria viviente de Jesús”.⁶ La misión está donde hay testigos del Evangelio. Su raíz es la iniciativa de Dios que nos mueve, el impulso del Espíritu que nos lleva siempre más allá de nosotros mismos.

La misión tiene que ser intercultural. Para ello hay que partir de la inculturación. Una fe que no se hace cultura no tiene futuro; un carisma que no se hace cultura no dura ni se propaga.

Ello supone y trae determinadas exigencias:

- Misiones interculturales
- Contenidos interculturales
- Destinatarios interculturales
- Mentalidad intercultural

Interculturalidad y misión desde la CLAR

Nuestro mundo globalizado es cada vez más multicultural. Los medios de transporte, las comunicaciones, las migraciones, etc... hacen que en un mismo lugar cohabiten personas de diversas culturas. El respeto y la tolerancia nos ayudan a coexistir pero no podemos ignorar la existencia de posturas racistas, dominantes, discriminatorias, que quisieran hasta acabar con todo lo que sea diverso, distinto. La multiculturalidad es un hecho y al mismo tiempo está permeando fuertemente la vida de los pueblos, no obstante las leyes o barreras que quieran frenarla. La multiculturalidad es condición necesaria para la interculturalidad, pero no es suficiente.⁷ El paso a la interculturalidad se da en el momento en que valoro la diferencia, con respeto, pero sin dejar de tener una mirada crítica. Además posibilita el que cada persona aporte y enriquezca desde su mirada.

América Latina y el Caribe son una realidad multicultural e intercultural. En estas tierras del Nuevo Continente, han cohabitado por siglos culturas diversas, ricas, extraordinarias. La colonización del siglo XVI no pudo erradicarlas del todo, haciendo surgir también nuevas culturas que dieron a luz al pueblo mestizo, criollo, mulato... Las culturas afro-americanas e indígenas son una realidad bien viva y

⁴ Cfr: DEL VALLE, Carlos, *La interculturalidad como llamado y horizonte de misión para la Vida Religiosa*, <http://www.fsfbelley.net/wpINTERCULTURALIDAD-Cap%C3%ADulo-G.-2013.doc>.

⁵ Idem

⁶ Juan Pablo II

⁷ Cfr.: OCHOA, José Miguel, *Interculturalidad y Vida Consagrada*, <http://documents.mx/documents/>

presente con la que aún falta dialogar más como Iglesia y como Vida Consagrada.

La realidad que vivimos es compleja y para intentar comprenderla necesitamos acercarnos a ella con diversidad de miradas, desde fuera y desde dentro, dialogando con otras formas de ver, de estar, de involucrarse en ella. En esta realidad compleja vivimos todos y todas, esperando encontrar en ella un espacio para vivir y convivir, un espacio para el buen o bien vivir. La Vida Consagrada es consciente de que esta realidad es su espacio teológico, es aquí donde escucha el llamado, donde recibe una misión y a donde es enviada “a salir a prisa al encuentro de la vida”, dispuesta a “dar vida y vida en abundancia”. Pero también “la diversidad y la interculturalidad, son una realidad emergente en la VC”.⁸ La interculturalidad “es un signo de vitalidad de la acción del Espíritu en la vida consagrada”.⁹

Esta es la convicción de la VC latinoamericana y caribeña, esta es su propuesta de espiritualidad; una espiritualidad que ayude a desentrañar, a leer y releer el Misterio que fundamenta, sostiene, contiene, tanta diversidad, riqueza, complejidad, fragmentación, presentes en esta realidad en la que habitamos y que nos habita, dentro y fuera de la VC. Además, la VC se entiende como una vida en relación con los diferentes, una vida que cultiva el encuentro, que se deja cambiar y produce transformación. Es así como se va revitalizando. Somos “ministros del encuentro”.¹⁰

Podemos decir que la VC se siente llamada a vivir una espiritualidad

intercultural o a hacer de la interculturalidad un camino de espiritualidad. “La vida religiosa tradicional, dice el teólogo Roberto Tomichá, en su camino de búsqueda y reposicionamiento socio-cultural, está urgentemente llamada a proponer espiritualidades misioneras más interculturales, caso contrario corre simplemente el riesgo de quedar al margen de la vida y de la historia, sin respuestas significativas para el hombre y la mujer de hoy”.¹¹ El P. Tomichá me ha dado luz para describir algunas de las convicciones más fuertes que impulsan el camino de la interculturalidad en la VC latinoamericana y caribeña.

a) Todos buscamos la vida

Al decir todos entiendo todos los seres vivos: vegetales, animales, el cosmos y el microcosmos, la persona humana... y vamos comprendiendo que en la medida que la buscamos y cuidamos en los demás seres, la encontramos también para nosotros. La propia vida se entiende sólo en relación con...

La persona humana no es más el centro de la creación, sino la vida, entendida en forma global; la Vida con mayúsculas, que es Cristo Jesús: *Todo fue creado por Él y para Él... Todo se mantiene en Él.*

Como VC latinoamericana, nos comprometemos a buscar y defender la vida favoreciendo la biodiversidad presente, sobre todo, en los pueblos indígenas, en la Amazonía. Formamos parte de la Red Panamazónica (REPAM) que pretende escuchar a Dios en los clamores por la vida, presentes en esos pueblos devastados por los intereses económicos internacionales. Queremos ser una VC “místico profética al servicio de la vida”, que busca la vida y vida en abundancia para todos, especialmente para los más pobres, las y los marginados, las víctimas de la trata humana, las mujeres.

⁸ Idem

⁹ Cfr: DEL VALLE, Carlos, *La interculturalidad como llamado y horizonte de misión para la Vida Religiosa*, <http://www.fsfbelley.net/wpcontent/uploads/2014/05/18.INTERCULTURALIDADCap%C3%ADtulo-G.-2013.doc>.

¹⁰ Cfr: DEL VALLE, Carlos, *La interculturalidad como llamado y horizonte de misión para la Vida Religiosa*, <http://www.fsfbelley.net/wpcontent/uploads/2014/05/18.INTERCULTURALIDADCap%C3%ADtulo-G.-2013.doc>.

¹¹ En *Revista Testimonio: “Inculturación”*, No. 230, Nov. Dic. 2008, Santiago de Chile, TOMICHÁ, Roberto, *Espiritualidades misioneras inter-culturales*, pág. 59.

b) El diálogo es el camino

Esta búsqueda de la vida y vida en abundancia va integrando un nuevo estilo de VC, nuevas formas de ser comunidad, de ser hermanas y hermanos, de orar, de proyectar la misión; nuevas formas de participación y de relación entre el hombre y la mujer. Sentimos la necesidad de releer y revitalizar nuestra identidad misionera ya que somos consagrados para la misión. “¿Será posible una VC con rostro, pensamiento, corazón intercultural?”¹²

“Si tenemos el genuino deseo de escuchar a los otros, entonces aprenderemos a mirar el mundo con ojos distintos y a apreciar la experiencia humana tal y como se manifiesta en las distintas culturas y tradiciones”

(Papa Francisco)

La interculturalidad es una opción y se da entre las distintas personas con diferentes culturas que se ponen a dialogar desde la igualdad, conscientes de la dignidad de todas las culturas. Es una experiencia de reciprocidad que implica saber escuchar, apertura de corazón, capacidad de reconciliación, en un diálogo que nos ayude a construir un nuevo proyecto de vida consagrada, más auténtica. La clave es la relacionalidad.

Este diálogo intercultural permite que cada persona pueda aportar y contribuir, desde su cultura, al carisma congregacional. Es una actitud necesaria para releer el carisma, cuestionar sus posturas monoculturales o uniformes, para ensanchar la tienda, para vivir de manera nueva la oración, la liturgia, la vida comunitaria, el apostolado, la formación de las nuevas generaciones, etc... En el fondo este diálogo intercultural es una vuelta al Evangelio, a sus propuestas, para

reformularlas “crítica y comunitariamente desde y para el contexto actual”.¹³

Para llegar a esta actitud dialogal, necesitamos de una profunda experiencia espiritual que nos ayude a superar una mentalidad colonialista presente también en las comunidades religiosas. “Las mujeres líderes de las congregaciones también necesitan espacios de encuentro para reflexionar sobre sus experiencias” (Patricia Farrell, osf).¹⁴

c) Iniciar un proceso de descolonización

En el Documento de Aparecida del CELAM se dice que “permanece aún en los imaginarios colectivos una mentalidad colonial con respecto a los pueblos originarios y afroamericanos”¹⁵. Esta mentalidad está muy presente en nuestro continente, no sólo en relación a los pueblos originarios o afroamericanos, sino permea también las relaciones humanas en general, cuando se discrimina a todo lo diferente, trátase de niños, mujeres, migrantes, prostitutas, homosexuales, etc...

La VC latinoamericana y caribeña ha estado inmersa, por su historia, en esta mentalidad colonial, y expresa a veces actitudes discriminatorias o paternalistas con las y los diferentes.

El reto que sentimos como VC de la CLAR es el de dejar esta mentalidad colonialista, no sólo en nuestras relaciones hacia afuera, sino también en las relaciones hacia dentro de nuestras comunidades. Necesitamos revalorar nuestras culturas, creer en la riqueza de la diferencia. Propiciar espacios donde, las y los jóvenes que ingresan a nuestras comunidades, puedan compartir sus expresiones y valores diferentes; escucharlos, acogerlos,

¹² En *Revista Testimonio: “Inculturación”*, No. 230, Nov. Dic. 2008, Santiago de Chile, TOMICHÁ, Roberto, *Espiritualidades misioneras inter-culturales*, pág. 59.

¹³ En *Revista Testimonio: “Inculturación”*, No. 230, Nov. Dic. 2008, Santiago de Chile, TOMICHÁ, Roberto, *Espiritualidades misioneras inter-culturales*, pág. 62.

¹⁴ CLAR, *Memorias Congreso de Vida Consagrada*, Ed. CLAR, Colombia 2015, p. 335

¹⁵ DA, 96

incorporando sus propuestas, poniendo atención de no querer meter todo en el molde de nuestras culturas o maneras de pensar monoculturales y muchas veces colonizadoras. Esa expresión tan conocida de san Agustín aquí se aplica muy bien: “En lo necesario, unidad; en lo discutible, libertad; en todo, caridad”, en todo Evangelio, pero encarnado en el hoy intercultural.

d) La Trinidad es el fundamento de la interculturalidad

Nos dice hermosamente el Papa Francisco en la encíclica *Laudato Si*: “Las Personas divinas son relaciones subsistentes, y el mundo, creado según el modelo divino, es una trama de relaciones. Las criaturas tienden hacia Dios, y a su vez es propio de todo ser viviente tender hacia otra cosa, de tal modo que en el seno del universo podemos encontrar un sinnúmero de constantes relaciones que se entrelazan secretamente. Esto no sólo nos invita a admirar las múltiples conexiones que existen entre las criaturas, sino que nos lleva a descubrir una clave de nuestra propia realización. Porque la persona humana más crece, más madura y más se santifica a medida que entra en relación, cuando sale de sí misma para vivir en comunión con Dios, con los demás y con todas las criaturas. Así asume en su propia existencia ese dinamismo trinitario que Dios ha impreso en ella desde su creación. Todo está conectado, y eso nos invita a madurar una espiritualidad de la solidaridad global que brota del misterio de la Trinidad”.¹⁶

Si queremos dar el paso hacia una espiritualidad intercultural será en la medida que contemplemos y vayamos haciendo experiencia del Misterio Trinitario, que nos llevará a asumir nuevas actitudes y valores interculturales.

El primer horizonte de novedad que surgió del último congreso de VC organizado por la CLAR dice así:

“Partimos del origen y la fuente de la vocación a la vida consagrada: el Misterio de Dios-Trinidad, quien es al mismo tiempo, modelo de relaciones nuevas, recíprocas, vividas en la circularidad del amor y de la igualdad”.

El Amor Trinitario “es incluyente, rebasa el espacio y el tiempo, los pueblos y las culturas... los lenguajes relacionados con ciertos momentos históricos...”.¹⁷ Hacer experiencia de este Amor Trinitario es como entrar en la *vida según el Espíritu* (Rm 8,9) de la que nos habla San Pablo, que no se refiere a tener una actitud intimista, sino que es un proceso de santidad que nace del encuentro con Jesucristo y se traduce en actitudes de entrega, apertura, servicio y compromiso.

Esta es la mística profética que como CLAR nos sentimos urgidas y urgidos, por el Espíritu, a vivir. Una mística que es ante todo experiencia humana y a la vez divina, relacional como la misma Trinidad. “Necesitamos cultivar una vida contemplativa que permita que Dios ilumine la oscuridad del corazón para que podamos ver lo invisible, y conocer lo escondido a los sabios y revelado a los sencillos. Si nuestro referente no es Jesús, no tendremos la capacidad que Él tenía de ver más allá de los esquemas internos de las culturas en las que participamos” (Patricia Farrell, osf).¹⁸

e) Apertura de corazón

Necesitamos como VC aprender a dialogar “las diferencias y con las y los diferentes”.¹⁹ Este aprendizaje brota de la contemplación del Misterio Trinitario y sólo desde ahí se vuelve testimonio evangélico para el mundo. Necesitamos

¹⁷ En *Revista Testimonio: “Inculturación”*, No. 230, Nov. Dic. 2008, Santiago de Chile, TOMICHÁ, Roberto, *Espiritualidades misioneras interculturales*, pág. 64.

¹⁸ CLAR, *Memorias Congreso de Vida Consagrada*, Ed. CLAR, Colombia 2015, p. 368

¹⁹ DE VALLESCAR, Diana, *Tender puentes, abrir caminos. Vida consagrada y multiculturalidad*, Publicaciones claretianas, Madrid 2006, p. 26.

¹⁶ *Laudato Si*, 240

salir y abrirnos a nuevas oportunidades, para vivir la misión desde un diálogo intercultural auténtico.²⁰ La Buena Nueva que somos enviadas y enviados a anunciar, es irrenunciable, pero este anuncio debe surgir “de la escucha sincera, atenta y profunda de la alteridad personal, social, cultural, religiosa”.²¹ A la base de este anuncio de la Buena Nueva está el testimonio de la propia vida y de la comunidad fraterna y sororal; vivir entre nosotras y nosotros la escucha atenta a cada persona, la acogida intergeneracional. “La interculturalidad en la vivencia comunitaria prepara a la inculturación en el campo de la misión”.²² El mismo servicio de la autoridad tendría que vivirse más en el discernimiento incluyente, que propicia el respeto, la escucha, la valoración; que es incluyente. Incorporar expresiones religiosas diferentes, más evangélicas y más interculturales.”

Necesitamos como VC retomar el significado del servicio de la autoridad, retomar nuestros gestos concretos en relación a la acogida de las diferencias, así como revisar si tenemos aún actitudes discriminatorias o colonialistas al interno de nuestras comunidades y hacia fuera en la misión. Aparecida nos dice que “nos formamos con un corazón universal, abierto a todas las culturas y a todas las verdades, cultivando nuestra capacidad de contacto humano y de diálogo”²³. En resumen Aparecida nos invita a tener entre nosotras y nosotros relaciones más humanas que acogen la alteridad.

f) El futuro de la misión dependerá de la contemplación

Ante tanta deshumanización nuestro mundo postmoderno busca la trascendencia, la “dimensión espiritual de la vida como antídoto a la deshumanización”.²⁴ La misión tendrá futuro en la medida que seamos una VC más contemplativa; sólo así seremos creíbles. Una contemplación que nace de una profunda vida de oración, que nos va formando la mirada para ver la realidad como la ve Jesús, para reconocer a Dios presente en ella: en todas las cosas, en todas las culturas y en todas las personas. Esta mirada contemplativa nos permite discernir el Reino presente en la historia, desde los pobres, desde sus culturas, religiones, movimientos sociales. Una mirada bajo la acción del Espíritu Santo.

El fruto de la contemplación será una VC más fraterna y sororal, más humana y humanizante, portadora de la vida y que sale a su encuentro. La interculturalidad hacia dentro de la VC tendrá frutos de vida plena hacia fuera, en nuestras pastorales, en todas nuestras relaciones. La palabra que comuniquemos será auténtica porque nacerá del encuentro profundo con el Misterio Trinitario que nos habita, será entonces profética.

La VC está llamada a la apertura, a la novedad del Espíritu. ¡Qué nada nos robe la interculturalidad! La VC inserta en Latinoamérica y el Caribe, ha sido un ejemplo de interculturalidad, con religiosos y religiosas concretas, contemplativas y contemplativos, mistagogas y mistagogos, involucrados en estos procesos desde la encarnación.

²⁰ Cfr. Documento de Trabajo nn. 95, 108, en USG, UISG, *Pasión por Cristo, Pasión por la Humanidad*, Publicaciones Claretianas, Madrid 2005, pp. 27-72.

²¹ En *Revista Testimonio: “Inculturación”*, No. 230, Nov. Dic. 2008, Santiago de Chile, TOMICHÁ, Roberto, *Espiritualidades misioneras interculturales*, pág. 66.

²² STECKLING, Wilhelm, OMI, *Inculturación del Evangelio y Vida Consagrada*, Reflexiones de un participante a partir del Congreso de la USG-UISG, Roma, 18 de enero de 2005.

²³ DA 377

²⁴ *Redentoris Missio* (RMI) 38

Algunas aplicaciones²⁵

1. Acoger y gobernar las diferencias y favorecer la participación

El tema de la inculturación es complejo y pide que tengamos un adecuado conocimiento de sus implicaciones, de sus causas y dinanismos, tanto en lo que se refiere a la misión o al crecimiento cultural de la Congregación. Corresponde aceptar los desafíos de la interculturalidad con discernimiento, audacia, diálogo y provocación evangélica”.²⁶

El ritmo con el que hay que vivir este proceso de interculturalidad en la VC sería el mismo que vive la Iglesia, que trata de ir escuchando las voces de las diversas culturas, de ir las integrando como riqueza. La Iglesia nos invita a mirar la realidad en su complejidad, a comprenderla y a amarla.

La interculturalidad nos enseña a abrirnos, a ser receptivos, a adquirir un modo nuevo de ver, de vivir y de ejercer la misión. La vida religiosa está consagrada para la misión. Cada congregación va fraguando su cultura, la cual se desarrolla y enriquece en la medida que se abre a lo diverso y le da oportunidad de decir el carisma con expresiones nuevas. El carisma puede ser vivido de diferentes maneras, lo que nos hace relativizar formas de pensar, de sentir o de expresarnos. Lo importante es que mantengamos vivos los valores del Reino. “Si insistimos en la fraternidad, la paz, la justicia, el diálogo, la reconciliación, la colaboración..., no hay cabida para las discordias, los malentendidos, las tensiones, las divisiones, los nacionalismos exacerbados, etc.”²⁷

Es necesario que ante los problemas que se dialoguen en este camino de la interculturalidad, se tenga muy clara la

visión de la identidad y misión del Instituto, su historia, sus diferentes experiencias de interculturalidad. Es preciso hacer posible momentos de encuentro y motivar a la participación transparente, fluida, en donde no falte la escucha paciente y el diálogo sereno. “Encontrarse es todo”²⁸, cuando se favorece realmente la participación. Juntas y juntos buscamos el bien común y facilitamos tanto el intercambio como la complementariedad.

A quien tiene el servicio de la autoridad, le toca gobernar las diferencias, procurando la información, el diálogo, la corresponsabilidad. Favorecer el discernimiento y acompañamiento de las nuevas comunidades interculturales, con un proyecto de vida según el carisma propio y sobre todo, insistir en la participación en la vida y misión de la Congregación en todos los niveles. Tendría que promoverse la descentralización y conceder una sana autonomía a las regiones y comunidades. Sería muy bueno releer en comunidad las Constituciones, para integrar en ellas los valores y expresiones religiosas y culturales. Los Capítulos Generales son un espacio privilegiado para discernir los nuevos signos de vida que surgen de los diferentes contextos culturales.

Hay que discernir, además, en este proceso de participación intercultural, la posibilidad de la representatividad en los distintos cargos de gobierno donde se refleje el valor que se da a la diversidad de culturas y que se apuesta por relaciones interculturales. La conveniencia de dividir o reagrupar según las propias culturas por salvaguardarlas, sin ignorar el peligro de caer en partidismos, nacionalismos, que no buscan el bien común del Instituto. Las mayorías y minorías en los Institutos que no siempre son bien articuladas, donde puede predominar el famoso “siempre se ha hecho así”, o el afán de establecer diferencias en detalles que a veces se

²⁵ A partir de aquí sigo un aporte del P. José Ma. Arnáiz a la revista española de la CONFER.

²⁶ OCHOA, José Miguel, *Interculturalidad y Vida Consagrada*, <http://documents.mx/documents/intercultural-id-ad-y-vida-a.html>

²⁷ ARNÁIZ, José María

²⁸ ARNÁIZ, José María

vuelven verdaderas barreras para la comunión y la interculturalidad. “La interculturalidad no siempre se vive tan bien en la comunidad como tendría que ser”.²⁹

2. Formar para la comunión intercultural

Formar para la comunión, pensando en la misión. El Evangelio es una fuerza transformadora en el corazón del formando. Formar para una VC que sea contracultural y por eso significativa y comunal.

Los años de formación inicial son los mejores para educar y formar en la diferencia, para la diversidad como camino de unidad. Es también tarea de todas y todos los consagrados. Hay que prepararnos para vivir en esta realidad multicultural, ayudarnos a pasar del yo al nosotros.

La formación capacita a los formandos a lo diverso y los enseña a dialogar; aprenden la colaboración, a discernir los valores del Reino, a utilizar los medios de comunicación adecuadamente, a orar diversamente aprendiendo de las otras culturas. Esto va disponiendo el corazón del formando para la misión en cualquier parte del mundo. Qué importante es también brindar una formación en historia, enseñarles otras lenguas, sensibilizarlos a valorar las culturas del propio pueblo y las de los demás. El formando aprende entonces a mirar la vida y la muerte de otra manera, con otras miradas y se enriquece.

Pero lo más significativo de esta etapa es aprender a dialogar para comprender otros puntos de vista. Supone formar en la hospitalidad: “Sin hospitalidad nuestras comunidades y personas se encerrarán en sí mismas, en su cultura propia y perderán posibilidades de interacción con el todo. Lo opuesto a la hospitalidad es la hostilidad, el rechazo de lo diferente, la

violencia. Hoy en nuestro mudo, hay violencia cultural, choque de civilizaciones, enfrentamientos terribles que nacen de la exclusión y no aceptación del diferente. La exclusión se está convirtiendo en el pecado primordial de los procesos de globalización. Pero incluso dentro de la Iglesia se manifiesta la hostilidad ante <lo otro> a través de la intolerancia, la exclusión, la falta de diálogo”.³⁰

El formando aprende a valorar las culturas de los demás al mismo tiempo que se evidencian las limitaciones de la propia. Es todo un camino de ascesis y de humildad. Los jóvenes formandos, en general, están abiertos a este intercambio, por lo que los institutos o centros de formación interreligiosos e interculturales, así como experiencias apostólicas con otras congregaciones o en otras culturas, ayudan a este enriquecimiento mutuo.

Para estos formandos, se necesitan formadores mistagogos, que no sólo sean buenos maestros, sino también testigos. “Ellos enseñan a mirar a los ojos, a mirar con otros ojos y a dejarse mirar a los ojos.”³¹ La VC en Latinoamérica y el Caribe, está llamada a vivir hoy el profetismo de la interculturalidad. De aquí dependerá su futuro. “Las lenguas que habla el Espíritu son diversas y cada uno/a necesita acoger su melodía, con empeño, receptividad, entendimiento y corazón. Pues... cuando se vayan los que sienten, piensan, viven, trabajan, oran diferente ¿quién se quedará para guardar el banquete?”³²

²⁹ STECKLING, Wilhelm, OMI, *Inculturación del Evangelio y Vida Consagrada*, Reflexiones de un participante a partir del Congreso de la USG-UISG, Roma, 18 de enero de 2005.

³⁰ GARCÍA PAREDES, José Cristo Rey, *Cómplices del Espíritu. El nuevo paradigma de la misión*, Publicaciones Claretianas, Madrid, 2014, pág. 204

³¹ En *Revista Testimonio*, No. 230 Nov. Dic. 2008, Santiago de Chile, ARNÁIZ, José María, *Un carisma hecho cultura. Una cultura nacida de un carisma*, pág. 56

³² En *Revista Testimonio*, No. 230 Nov. Dic. 2008, Santiago de Chile, DEL VALLESCAR, Diana, *Una multiculturalidad asumida y redimida y vida consagrada*, pág.33

Conclusión

A manera de slogans:

- Pasar de la multiculturalidad a la interculturalidad. No quedarnos en una “asunción a medio camino” (*aculturación*)³³.

- En la VC o somos interculturales o no seremos significativos.

- La interculturalidad es una forma de profecía, es una propuesta alternativa ante un mundo globalizado y que pretende homogeneizarlo todo.

- Implica actitudes de diálogo, humildad, escucha: saber mirar, dejarse mirar...

- Implica una actitud contemplativa para mirar sin prejuicios, ni desde estructuras personales, congregacionales, culturales... contemplar los valores presentes en las otras culturas, dialogar con ellos para complementarnos, enriquecernos, no sólo desde la tolerancia, sino desde el reconocimiento profundo de sus valores.

- Necesitamos de una mística y de mistagogos para formar en la interculturalidad.

- Necesitamos de una espiritualidad intercultural.

- Empezar por el diálogo intercultural en nuestras comunidades, pues sólo desde ahí daremos testimonio al mundo de que es posible la unidad en la diversidad.

- La interculturalidad es una oportunidad para la VC porque favorece la solidaridad, la acogida de la diversidad, las experiencias del voluntariado, la empatía hacia los pobres, el respeto ecológico, la búsqueda de la paz³⁴.

- La VC puede aportar muchos valores humanizantes con su presencia encarnada en las diversas culturas.

- Lo diferente no es igual a lo contrario, sino que es complementario, como las diferentes notas de una sinfonía que son necesarias para crear una armonía.

Y hablando de armonía se me viene al corazón María nuestra Madre. Ella, con su actitud, nos dice que la inculturalidad es, más que nada, cuestión de *Visitación*. Ella, *sale a prisa al encuentro de la Vida*, llevándola sobre todo en su propio vientre. Visitación que sale al encuentro de la diversidad, que supone viajar, salir de la propia casa, movida por el Misterio que habita su vida joven y la hace misionera, para encontrarse con el Misterio que habita también a Isabel en su avanzada edad. Esta Visitación es la que hace posible el encuentro de lo antiguo con lo nuevo, de la rica tradición con la novedad del Espíritu; encuentro de la mirada de dos mujeres que se miran a los ojos, y aprenden a mirar con otros ojos la vida, la historia, fusionándose en un salto de alegría, en bendición, en Magníficat. Un encuentro que las enriquece. La Visita de María a Isabel, el salir de su Misterio, le hace cantar la canción que incluye todas las culturas, todas las marginalidades, todas las exclusiones y las pobreza... culturas que buscan la vida, esa vida que Ella lleva en sus entrañas; un cántico que es al mismo tiempo contracultural, porque derriba todo lo que amenaza la vida, a quienes no la reconocen, a quienes la vacían de valor y sentido. El Magníficat podría ser la música de fondo de la interculturalidad.

La VC en AL y el C, tiene aún, la tarea de profundizar en el diálogo con las culturas afroamericanas e indígenas, no sólo en relación a la misión sino al mismo interior de las comunidades religiosas integradas también por vocaciones provenientes de estas culturas emergentes. Hay “un clamor histórico que debe ser escuchado por la humanidad y en especial por la VC de hoy”,³⁵ de manera que de

³³ En *Revista Testimonio: “Inculturación”*, No. 230, Nov. Dic. 2008, Santiago de Chile, SUESS Paulo, *Planteamiento del tema de las culturas*, pág. 15

³⁴ Cfr: OCHOA, José Miguel, *Interculturalidad y Vida Consagrada*, <http://documents.mx/documents/intercultural-id-ad-y-vida-a.html>

³⁵ CLAR, *Memorias Congreso de Vida Consagrada*, Ed. CLAR, Colombia 2015, p. 349

“vida a nuevos modos de actuar el carisma, a nuevas iniciativas y a nuevas formas de caridad apostólica”.³⁶ Una VC nueva, “con rostro, pensamiento y corazón indígenas, (afroamericanos), desde la realidad latinoamericana”.³⁷ La presencia continua del Espíritu en la VC no dejará de compartirnos su fuerza creadora, que *hace nuevas todas las cosas*, que configura el nuevo rostro de una VC intercultural.

“Si la democracia viene de los griegos, el cristianismo de los judíos, y la técnica de meditación, de Oriente...”

Si las cifras que sumamos son árabes, las letras que escribimos son latinas... y la imprescindible rueda es persa...

Si Asia entregó el arroz, los países mediterráneos el trigo y América el maíz...

Si muchos ritmos que bailamos son africanos... la no violencia que más inspira es India... y el universal villancico “Noche de paz” es germánico... Si la raza humana es de todos los humanos y humanas de esta tierra... ¿por qué no luchar para que todas las culturas dialoguen y aporten en la construcción de un mundo en justicia y en la paz?”

“If democracy came from the Greeks, Christianity from the Jews, the techniques of meditation from the East....

If the figures we use came from Arabic, the letters we write with, Latin ... and the unique wheel, Persian...

If Asia produced rice, the Mediterranean countries grain, and America sweet corn...

If many of the musical rhythms we dance to are African... and non-violence, Indian... and the universal carol: “Silent Night”, German.... If the human race is made up of all the peoples of this earth ... why cannot all cultures dialogue and seek to offer their contribution to build a world of justice and peace?”.

Msgr. Pedro Casaldáliga

An English version of this article is available on our website:
www.sedosmission.org

³⁶ Papa Francisco, carta a los Consagrados en el Año de la Vida Consagrada, 1

³⁷ CLAR, *Memorias Congreso de Vida Consagrada*, Ed. CLAR, Colombia 2015, p. 335

What are you taking with you from this Seminar?

Some Participants' thoughts



ENGLISH:

- I'm taking with me the joyful hope that interculturality is possible. It is no longer an option but a mission entrusted to each one and a condition to follow Jesus Christ in the pathway of solidarity and service.
- Better understanding about multicultural competence, clear direction in daily life, good experience to meet many participants from different countries.
- A beautiful colourful seminar with the participation of people from the five continents.
- A deep awareness that intercultural living does not just happen by putting people together, but that it needs work and steps together.
- Excellent presentations!
- This is my first time to come and join the Seminar, for me everything was good and helpful to get support to apply in my community and in the society. I have enrich myself by listening and participating. I'm really grateful to SEDOS and appreciate all the effort of the management group!
- I go with desire to be the change that I want to see in our world even if it is in small ways, and the desire to build bridges across cultures.
- Interculturality is God's prophecy today.
- The joy of meeting others.
- The input sessions.
- I want to say a big "thank you" for creative ways of organization!

FRENCH:

- Ce que j'ai reçu de ce séminaire est un don de Dieu à travers les autres. Je prends avec moi l'urgence à la formation interculturelle dans nos communautés.
 - Le séminaire a été très riche. Tous les sous-thème abordés ont été très éclairantes et édifiants pour la vie et la mission interculturelle. Les expériences vécues partagées en plénière et en groupes linguistiques ont été très interpellants. Merci pour toute l'organisation!
 - Je prends une très bonne impression et la richesse de la vie religieuse. Merci à SEDOS de toujours penser à produire des sujets d'actualité et de permettre entre tout ce monde.
 - Merci beaucoup pour ces riches information que j'ai reçu durant ces 5 jours. Je suis vraiment très heureuse d'apprendre beaucoup sur ce thème.
-

SPANISH:

- Nuevos rostros en mi ojos, nuevas personas que he conocido y con las cuales he compartido y me han enriquecido. Muchas gracias a cada uno del equipo organizativo y el personal de apoyo para hacer posible este seminario.
 - La riqueza de la interculturalidad. La convicción de apostar por lo pequeño y el deseo de potenciar lo intercongregacional.
 - El don de la interculturalidad, anunciar este dono como profecía en el mundo de hoy. ¡Muchas Gracias! Es mi primera vez y voy a hacer propaganda en mi congregación.
-

ITALIAN:

- L'esperienza di interculturalità che abbiamo vissuto, un vero e proprio laboratorio di vita. Il tema generale con le sue sfide e le diverse conferenze. Grazie di tutto!
- Porto con me la ricchezza della condivisione, dei temi trattati e la sfida di investire di più nella formazione all'interculturalità. Tutto è stato formativo, ringrazio per tutto!



Photo Group from SEDOS Residential Seminar- 6 May 2016- Ariccia

**Thank you!
Merci beaucoup!
¡Muchas Gracias!
Grazie!**

FROM THE SEDOS STAFF



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