

WORKSHOP: INTERCULTURAL COMMUNITY AND VOCATION AND FORMATION MINISTRY

1. INTRODUCTION:

Developing intercultural competence is a core capability in the 21st century and involves cultural self-awareness, understanding the experiences of people from diverse communities, and the capability to adapt one's mindset and behavior to bridge across differences. Mitchell R. Hammer, 2011

TERMS: (see chart)

- a. Cross cultural (across cultures) going from one culture into another
 - b. Enculturation: **Refers to the process whereby an individual learns the requirements of the culture in which he or she is steeped. More generally, it is the process by which culture is passed on from one generation to the next. In this sense, enculturation is synonymous with "socialization".**
- c. from the Special Assembly of the Synod in 1985, **Pope John Paul II** defined inculturation in *Redemptoris Missio*, n. 52,
 - as ***"the intimate transformation of authentic cultural values through their integration in Christianity and the insertion of Christianity in the various human cultures."***
 - For effective formation across cultures as Disciples of Christ, **CULTURAL MATURITY IS A MUST**. (from Vatican !!)
- d. Intercultural community is a faith reality which lives the Good News that we are all children of God, that in our world with its many divisions, conflicts, prejudices and disintegration, we witness to our communion in God by how we are together in living God's mission of oneness and inclusivity: *There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.* (Galatians 3:28 NRSV) Jesus became one of us, emptied himself completely in order to draw all people into the heart of God. Jesus totally entered into the world excluding nothing and no-one from his love, his reaching out and drawing in. when we walk with him through the Gospels we see Jesus, who knows his identity and grows in wisdom age and grace. He enters into dialogue, into relationship with women, Romans, Samaritans, tax-collectors, Pharisees, children, tax-collectors. He is inclusive,

excluding no-one from his concern. Also He opens himself to be changed and challenged by those who are foreigners (the Syro-phenician woman) and awed by the faith of the centurion. Jesus, the teacher, our lord and God lived among and with us. Jesus' life and mission is lived in intercultural communion. Each person was welcomed by Jesus as unique and equally valuable and precious, to be listened to, accepted, revered and respected. The Good News He proclaimed is God is love and God loves each person and all of creation, without exception. His call to his followers was to proclaim this Good News to all the nations. He commissioned his disciples to go forth, to tell all peoples that they are God's beloved, that we are God's Children, brothers and sisters with Jesus our brother. They, we are commissioned to proclaim this Good news by our lives, our relationships in every corner of the world.

The Pentecost experience, the pouring forth of the holy Spirit gave all the power of Love to go forth, to speak to all in their own languages to exclude no one from this message. This proclamation is the motivation, the source of energy for striving to live and minister interculturally.

The Acts of the Apostles is a testament of the difficult, challenging, enriching, dialogic, process of incarnating the Good News of Jesus' life, death and resurrection

Acts 4 expresses in living that all are one, bound together by Jesus Christ: living Community

Acts of the Apostles is a work in progress continuing unto the present day. And so today, we are called in our divided world in an urgent way to live interculturally as an essential prophetic witness of religious communities

The incarnation is the model for intercultural living; the Word becomes flesh and enters fully into the human situation into the world. We look at Jesus, at his fidelity to his own culture, own identity. Inclusivity, accepting as equals: women, men, Samaritans. Jesus related to all from the depths of himself, from his essence—Love. We somehow are uncertain, fearful, uncomfortable how to relate to someone different from me. We compare, judge, compete, treat the other as more powerful, less powerful. We are aware we need to grow in meeting the stranger as well as being the stranger. We are invite to approach another person, faith, culture with an attitude of reverence and love:

| When we approach the person of another faith, culture than our own it will be in a spirit of expectancy to find how God has been speaking to him-her and what new understandings of the grace and love of God we may ourselves discover in this encounter. Our first task in approaching another people, another culture, another religion, is to take off our shoes, for the place we are approaching is holy. Else we

may find ourselves treading on men's dreams. More serious still, we may forget that God was here before our arrival.

It is essential we are at home with who we are, what is our culture-- personal, family, ethnic. A good image for culture is an iceberg, where what is visible is very small, yet often is all that is considered by the other—dress, food, mannerisms, irritations, What is under the surface, deep within us is the energy, the substance from which we operate, the belief system, the world view, Who is God? Who am I? sexual ? family and society relations? Today, we are more and more interested in our ancestral DNA. Who am I? where do I come from?

Take a few moments to name some aspects of your cultural identity. Don't think too hard. Let the words surface

Next, you to take some moments to reflect on a personal experience of meeting, or working, living with persons of a different culture. When did you enter into another culture?

How did you feel? Name some of your thoughts, feelings, reactions? Was there a difference whether you were the minority, the majority culture? Prejudices? Stereotypes? What has been my past experience with that culture? How has the media, family, news, helped my encounter the other as different yet equal? How has it set up blocks?

Share with someone you haven't met before some of your reflection..

(Chart: Personal Cultural Identity)

Some of my own Experience

1. Coming to Canada—language, being a stranger
2. Entering religious life: lifestyle,
3. Teaching in a public school on the Prairies: aloneness,
4. Teaching, Parish and community work in Northern Alberta with First Nations, Metis, French/English, farmers, oil people
5. Novice Director in Sunyani: African Novitiate open for women coming from Kenya, Nigeria, Ghana, The Gambia, and Sierra Leone; We had an intercongregational Novitiate Program. Really cross cultural: communities and personnel from Italy, France, India, Indonesia, the Philippines, France, Brazil, Nigeria, Ireland, Canada, USA, indigenous Communities, Kenya, Ghana, Nigeria. Challenges. Focus: New members, Can you image, a novice coming from a small village in Kenya, to Ghana for novitiate with a Canadian / Nigerian/ American Novice Director to live with a

intercultural community with personnel and other novices from Ghana, Nigeria, and Kenya. Then added to that for their apostolic experience, each was missioned to a culture not their own. ?

Importance of realizing both the journey, the process of gradual integration, the natural reactions and responses and challenges within the person, the community, relationships etc.

Take Charts: 1. Effects of Culture Contact on Individuals and Community

(Gittins, A.J. 2015 *Living Mission Interculturally: Faith, Culture and the Renewal of Praxis*.
Collegeville MN: Liturgical Press. Ch. 4, 46-61)

2. Culture Shock

So to form intercultural community for mission is challenging and ongoing and unique. It requires:

1. Intentional commitment by every member
2. Sharing of faith since faith is cultural based and is faith in Jesus Christ is the center of community
3. Each one recognizes the challenges of living interculturally and makes a commitment to work together, each realizing one's own responsibility
4. It requires transformation and conversion on each one's part
5. Intercultural living is highly desired by God since no one culture is to be dominant
6. Goodwill is not enough. Also required are commitment and the sustained hard work necessary for gaining both skills and virtues.
7. Intercultural living requires: tact, diplomacy, graciousness, mutual respect, serious dialogue and the development of a common vision
8. Intercultural living is quite new—we have multicultural and international living—more side by side.
9. For international communities to continue and be viable, intercultural community is a must
10. For persons of faith as well living intercultural is a true witness of communion, of God's desire.

(cf.

Gittins, A.J. 2015 *Living Mission Interculturally: Faith, Culture and the Renewal of Praxis*.
Collegeville MN: Liturgical Press.

To live interculturally is not just an empty dream or something nice to do. Rather, the mission of the Church is to foster humanly, culturally the reconciliation of all in things in the universe to Christ (Col 1:20) For Religious Community, prophetic witness is the heart of religious life, so our mission is *to be models, real visible expressions of intercultural and ecological) reconciliation.* (Pope John Paul's address to the Bishops of Ghana in 1981. *Inculturation is a work of God. It is an activity of the living Body of Chris; it is a requirement of the Church Inculturation is a reflection of the Incarnation of the Word.* (to Kenyan bishops, 1980)

We need commitment, development of skills and nurturing virtues:

Skills

1. self-awareness: ability to reflect on the effect of one's behaviour and attitudes on others, conscious of prejudices and limits as well as talents and gifts; comfortable and at home with who she/he is, aware of the power of roles. (e. as Provincial. To be slow to speak, since my words could have the power to prevent others sharing their truth. The exercise of power is subtle, strong and very much operative in intercultural living, especially were one culture is dominant.
2. Appropriateness of actions, sensitive to different social situations and cultures. Ability to adapt dress etc according to context and person, respectful and sensitive (see examples in Acts of not eating meat given to idols to avoid offending people.
3. Self-confident-trust in one's own ability to handle challenges as well as know one's limitations
4. Effectiveness—ability to achieve what one sets out to do; realistic self-confidence, learning from mistakes.
5. Motivation: personal and faithful commitment to the goal to live interculturally because of love, faith and desire to witness to God's reconciliation and communion.
6. Ability to live on the margins; commitment to the poor. Important that all members of community both formators and formees commitment to live with the Anawim
7. Cultivate a Learning Posture, the being disciple. Teacher and learner interchange. Both the formator and the form and the new members are learners. First became least and least first—the way of Jesus, the gospel. Everyone has something to learn and the ignorant or arrogant have no place in an intercultural community.

8. Cultivating an ecumenical, collaborative openness with people of diverse cultures and personalities. Practice living diversity.
9. Willingness to change; flexibility; capacity to change perspective and be calm with the give and take of community life; acknowledge there are several valid insights. A flexibility is required that comes from knowing oneself and one's convictions and being open out of one's inner being.
10. Open-mindedness in formation. Desiring to form real bonds of collaboration. Knowing what is negotiable and what is non-negotiable. Compromise without watering down essentials.
11. Tolerance and forbearance. Sensitivity/ intuitive sympathy for another. We are one among many

FORMING A DISPOSITION, HOLINESS, WHOLENESS.

1. Respect for the Human person and for human culture. Person and culture are integrally interconnected.
2. Commitment to search for truth through respectful dialogue, mutual truth seeking
3. Dialogue changes both parties. Outcome cannot be known in advance.
4. Humility—earthiness, fruitfulness
5. Wisdom, Discernment, insight, knowledge and experience
6. Trustworthiness and a trusting heart.

Conclusion: We are called to build a home together, to discover, understand the dignity of difference; to challenge to see difference in a positive constructive light. This is very difficult we tend to compare, compete, criticise, judge, aromatize, want to improve. Unity in diversity. This is the way of Jesus.

Resources:

Gittins, A.J. 2015 *Living Mission Interculturally: Faith, Culture and the Renewal of Praxis*.
Collegeville MN: Liturgical Press. Ch. 4, 46-61.

Intercultural Competence for Religious Communities: Models, Gauges and Guides

Jon P. Kirby SVD

SEDOS, Rome, May 2016

Intercultural Community Living from the Claretians (on the internet)

All one body;

Forming Intercultural Communities

In the Spring 2017 issue of HORIZON, the journal of the National Religious Vocation Conference, Fr. Anthony J. Gittins, C.S.Sp., a professional social culture anthropologist, offers insights about what time and effort must be expended to have religious communities become truly intercultural. Fr. Gittins' theories have implications for other types of groups and communities, as well. We will present Fr. Gittins' article in installments over the next few weeks.