

August 2019, Nr.4

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Reflection by Sr Hermin

This Briefing mainly deals with the ICC meeting which was held in Chicago at the end of July and the beginning of August. Four parts, i.e. sisters from the USA, Brazil, the Philippines and Timor Leste met together to carry out the assignment from the General Chapter to reflect on the structure of our congregation and to experiment with working in close cooperation.

I want to share my reflection during the preparation of this meeting, when I had to think about the story of Nehemia. After the people of Israel had lived in a foreign land for seventy years, a certain group of people returned and began to rebuild Jerusalem. We read in Nehemiah 3:1, 7- 8: "Eliashib, the high priest, and his fellow priests began the rebuilding of the Sheep Gate. Alongside them, Melatja from Gibeon worked there and Mispa. Further on, Jerusalem was rebuilt to the broad wall by the goldsmith Uzziel the son of Harhaia, and by Hananiah, an ointment maker".

"The leader of this group is called Nehemia. He received a plan from God to rebuild the ruins of Jerusalem. He organizes this major project by performing the following steps. First, he investigates the situation. You can't make plans if you don't know what to do. Then he tells the people about his vision, born from his calling. He communicates this vision to his listeners in such a way that they too feel the desire to rebuild the walls and gates. It works, because the people answered with the words: "Then let's start building immediately." He then designates locations around the city, so that people can work in multiple locations at the same time. They worked, shoulder to shoulder".

As the example of Nehemiah shows, people from all different backgrounds worked together. The differences were no longer important. Everyone had the same goal. They set aside the differences and worked side by side until the goal was achieved.

Then it became something they had in common and that they would support in the future.



Intercultural cooperation isn't easy, but if you really want to achieve the same goal, you will regard difficulties as a challenge. Differences in language for instance may be resolved, but we also came across matters where finding a common solution will need a lot of time.

We are very aware that there are two trajectories within the congregation. One consists of the countries that are working towards completion. In these countries young sisters no longer enter the congregation. The other trajectory consists of the countries that still have young sisters in their midst and that therefore still have a future.

We cannot exist without each other; we need the experiences from the past to build the future.

It was a fruitful gathering that will make our joint future brighter!

I complete this reflection with the words from Romans 12: 4-5:

“We have many parts in the one body, and all these parts have different functions. In the same way, though we are many, we are one body in union with Christ, and we are all joined to each other as different parts of one body.”



Sr Graça.

ICC Chicago

Full of enthusiasm, the sisters from America, Brazil and the Philippines met on Sunday June 28th. The sisters from Timor Leste had announced that they had been delayed. The organizing group then decided to start the program a day later so that these sisters could also be present at the two-day workshop on 'interculturality'. However, that meant that the outing was moved forward, which meant that the sisters from Timor Leste could not take part in the trip to the Navy Pier and the Millennium Park.



It was fun to go to the city with the group by public transport, to see the immense high-rise buildings approach and to experience what the people of Chicago do on a bright, sunny day. The transfer from the Navy Pier to the Millenium park by water taxi made the day extra special.

Butterfly

After the opening celebration, the reflection by Sr Hermin and the explanation of the program by Sr Elisângela, Sr Pauline LaMothe took the lead.

Good wishes from the different parts and from individual sisters were

read aloud. This immediately showed the involvement and interest of those who were not present.

The participants were subsequently given the opportunity to get to know each other better in different ways.

The purpose of the meeting was to discuss with each other whether there are possibilities for closer cooperation between the four parts from which a new part could eventually evolve.



Sr Pauline LaMothe

Sr Pauline compared the development process with the life cycle of a butterfly. It starts with an egg. A female butterfly deposits many eggs on a flower / tree leaf. The eggs eat until they are drowsy and then become caterpillars. Those caterpillars are exposed to all kinds of dangers. Just think of the birds that like to catch a caterpillar.



And caterpillars also eat and eat and eat in order to grow and spin themselves into a cocoon. The last part of the transformation takes place there: the caterpillar emerges from its cocoon as a beautiful butterfly. With this input the basis was laid for the atmosphere of faith, hope and trust during the entire meeting.

Interculturality

The ICC consisted of two seminars; the first was about interculturality and the second about leadership. Sr Mary Tiernan started the day.

Together with the participants in the meeting, she tried to find an answer to the question of what is difficult about living in an international group.



*From left to right:
Srs Alice, Joanita, Julia and. Amy.*

Some cultural differences are very clear such as the different languages, eating habits and clothing. But there are also many differences that are not so visible: the norms and values. It is not that hard to get used to the visible differences, it is much harder to appreciate the differences in norms and values.

An example that immediately caught the imagination was the difference between the direct language that is used in Western-oriented countries and the indirect language that you see much more often in Asian countries. Young people use a language that differs from that of elderly people. This shows how difficult it may be to come together!



Are you willing to come out of your comfort zone to meet other cultures? What is the culture of consecrated life? How do you experience the vows? What is part of your charism? What inspires us as a congregation? It is interesting to think about this if you want to form an intercultural unity.

Conflicts are another part of life. If trust is betrayed, it is difficult to continue together. Conflicts also arise very easily when you do not understand each other's facial expressions. As soon as you get to know the other better, a different relationship may develop. It then becomes easier to be open to each other and to respect each other in order to live with each other. And you discover that one's differences enrich one another. Language is an important aspect in an intercultural environment. It can unite us, but it can also separate us. Openness and respect for the differences are needed to make everyone feel at home.

Leadership

Prior to the meeting, all participants expressed their thoughts on interculturality and leadership. These thoughts were presented and there were many similarities.

Sr Helen Cahill demonstrated the power of leadership in her seminar. Power in the sense of energy and responsibility, which is about love and freedom. It's not about winning, it's about hoping and enjoying what you do with each other, with your environment and with the earth.



Sr Helen Cahill

There are two models to visualise power. One model shows that you have power over something or someone. Power in the sense of control, which actually indicates that there is no respect for the other. The other model sees power as love where power is shared. You are open to change, you want to be influenced and you then act accordingly.

If power is love, then everyone is involved: you have cooperation and dialogue. Together you can work out any problems, everyone's voice is heard and you see giving and taking. Then it is not so difficult to take the step to servant leadership.

Serve others as a friend! The Bible gives a good example of this: the foot washing.



Srs Kardene, Dalva, Paula, Ângela and Joanita



By using 'power is love' you do not always have to agree to the request for help from the other. If 'no' is the answer that is best for the person, then that's good. Always ask yourself what is best for the person and for yourself.

You may see riches in a relationship. But not everything in a culture is good for everyone. The things that annoy must be talked about so that they can be understood. Search for the connection and you will find each other.

BBQ



Sr Mel Ryley had invited the entire group to a BBQ at her home. The sisters who were present had prepared a dish per country that reflected their culture. For example, we ate a hotdog from Chicago, Timorese-style fish and minced peppers from the Philippines. The Brazilian sisters welcomed us with oven-fresh cheese bread and caipirinha, a strong drink made from sugar cane. A colourful mixture of tastes and smells that illustrated the diversity of the different cultures.

It was a pleasant evening, certainly not least because of the music that was also intercultural.

Language

Our experience of the meeting was discussed on the last day in order to formulate concrete actions. The four parts have all expressed the wish to give further cooperation a chance. The most important thing to start with was the language. Years ago, the congregation decided that English should be our common language. That will now be implemented in these four parts.



The sisters from Timor Leste will first learn Portuguese, before they start working with English. The sisters who already know Portuguese will start with English.

The superiors of the four groups have agreed to have monthly contacts with each other so that the factual information about the different parts becomes common knowledge.

And several action points have been formulated that deserve attention. 'Recommendations' have been drawn up that will be discussed during the ICB in November.

All in all, it was an enjoyable meeting providing a lot of information that could be put to good use in the future.

A start has been made: the butterfly has laid eggs and is awaiting the next step in the process.



New community in Brazil

The community in Ibó has been closed. From August 10, the sisters have been active in Ibimirim:

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Ibimirim-PE

Phone number +55 83-98630-8087

After the provincial chapter, sisters have moved. Sr Paula, Sr Ângela and Sr Kardene live in Bayeux. In Cabedelo, Sr Joanita has a new roommate: Sr Graça. Sr Dalva and Sr Lusinete started in Ibimirim and finally Sr Maria and Sr Joérica stayed in Heitel Santiago.

New postulants in Indonesia



Three postulants in Nias.



Six postulants in Sibolga.



Seven postulants in NTT.

Sixteen young women started their postulate on 15 August. We wish them a successful period and hope that they will develop into self-confident people in our Congregation.

Joy & sorrow

Died:

- 11-07-2019 Sr Augustine KuijlenTilburg (the Netherlands)
- 03-08-2019 Sr Maris Stella Smeele Tilburg (the Netherlands)
- 17-08-2019 Sr Michaël de Bruin Tilburg (the Netherlands)
- 17-08-2019 Sr Tharcitio Falke Raalte (the Netherlands)
- 28-08-2019 Sr Wilma Verbeek Tilburg (the Netherlands)

Agenda

The next working visit will take place from September 17 to October 2.

Sr Hermin and Sr Elisângela will attend the final profession of two sisters in Timor Leste on September 24.

