

Day 2 – Day on Culture

The day began with a lovely prayer with video and slides prepared by the Sisters from India.

We were then graced with reflections offered on culture and intercultural living with Sr. Paul Razafy, “Servants of the Poor, Soeurs Jeanne Delanoue”, a sister originally from Madagascar, now living in Paris. Sr. Paul is part of groups reflecting on Justice and Peace.

The day was interspersed with time for questions and comments.

A few excerpts of her sharing:

Conscious of our internationality as a Congregation which offers its richness and hopes in the countries we minister in, Sr. Paul emphasized many times the on-going development of our culture as Sisters of St. Joseph of Lyon. At the same time we are from different Provinces and Regions, each with its own culture.

Through a power point Sr. Marie Elena rooted us in our history from the origins to today. Sr. Paul elaborated that the laity were attracted to our charism, desiring to drink from this source. The Congregation is always ‘becoming’. What it will be, only God knows.

Sr. Paul went on to talk of **Culture** defining it as a way of being and of becoming. She mentioned UNESCO’s definition of culture:

“...that complex whole which includes knowledge, beliefs, arts, morals, laws, customs, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by [a human] as a member of society.”



Focusing then on Intercultural living as an opportunity for Mission, Sr. Paul spoke of 3 possible attitudes for coping with otherness.

- 1) First attitude is “assimilation”: where one tries to find common values. Identify what is similar, assimilate it, but not close our eyes to otherness.
- 2) Second attitude is the absolute opposite to the first: The focus is totally on what is different in the

other; the difference is recognized, is tolerated. One co-exists but there is no dialogue. Each one becomes isolated from the other.

3) Third attitude is between the focus on similarities and differences; between universality and particularity; it is neither uniformity nor juxtaposition. One culture meets the other and is shaped by the culture of each one and continued dialogue helps to build a new culture. No culture dominates.

The other will reveal to me my true self!



Interdependence and Cultural Development

Sr. Paul stressed that intercultural living is an opportunity for mission and religious life. The challenge is to learn from the encounter; to let oneself be moved by the other.

On entering a religious community we become a member of a new group with a charism to share. A community is a gift of the Holy Spirit going from 'I' to 'We'. Everyone contributes to the body. Sr. Paul pointed out that there was no place for indifference rather solidarity with others in the group. It can be a struggle to move from 'I' to 'We' – my car, my computer, criticism of the community, accusations or desire for power. Interdependence suggests that the life of this body is of direct concern to me.

There is a need to develop a responsibility to deal with multicultural situations. A covenant or bond needs to be established with others, build on hope. Trust needs to be established to help all to work together and discover the hidden treasures of others. This enables members to find the connection with the community and the outside world. The witness we bear as a group is important and high levels of dialogue required. We need to adjust often and die to self. Strengths and weaknesses go together. Importance that we always move forward, even if one encounters difficulty.

The day came to a close with a Eucharistic Liturgy led by the Sisters from the Indian Province.

