**Best Practices – Mejores Prácticas (Experiencias)**

1. Our community built a new International Formation house in St. Louise. Before the Affiliates from Central America move to the Formation house, they learn English for a year. The Postulants spent about 2 months in the Motherhouse in Houston, TX to learn about the U.S. culture. At the International Formation house the Postulants and Novices live together. The International Formation Coordinator is from Nigeria and she is also in charge of the Annually Professed sisters. The Novice Director is from Guatemala and the Postulant Director is Irish. All try to learn either English or Spanish. They take turns cooking their country’s cuisine. At this time, we have two Kenyan Novices, one Guatemalan Novice, one Vietnamese who will be going there this year as Postulants.
2. We invited Fr. Anthony Gittins in our Assembly to talk for 2 ½ days and each got a copy of his book.
3. In our formation house we have begun using the practice—State of the Heart. At the moment, we are doing this practice once a month. It involves showing feelings, one’s experience with God. It is only in the beginning stage and could be done more frequently. State of the Heart is about encountering the other and creating a safe space and basis for creating “intercultural friendships.”
4. Mercy cocreated a working definition of theologically intercultural living- members of different cultures come together to interrelate and build relationships that help build a common charism and form a new culture.
5. Vocation – during the pre-candidacy period, have the vocation minister visit with the woman’s family. This time allows the family to ask questions and receive information. It allows the vocation minister to see and be with the woman’s family. It is sort of a reverse “Come and See” experience.

The vocation minister relates the experience, with the intention to assist in the transition with the community the woman will share community living.

1. Share culture with community members, i.e., food, music, holidays (Example: One Sister introduced the celebration of the Chinese new year and explained the personality and characteristics of the Chinese zodiac sign/symbol with the community members).
2. From the initial stages of formation, work on growth and personal story. Give a name to “who you are”; know oneself in your inner-most depth. Work on self-knowledge.
3. Take chances-- sharing the food and language of the other culture.
4. Compassionate, non-judgmental listening.
5. Create safe space to share historical moments that were painful within the history of each group and the impact it had. (Shared vulnerability)

Intentionality to tell the story.

1. Before starting the first stage of formation, we have seen the importance of getting to know the environment, family, culture, etc. of the Candidate. This is done in order to have an understanding of where she comes from.
2. Start intentional inter-congregational relationships in order to know other congregational cultures and to welcome them.
3. Intentional dialogue about the meaning of some aspects of family life.
   1. Values
   2. Celebrations (special occasions)
4. Encourage volunteering in order to awaken a vocation to service, even though interculturality is not intended, it facilitates the encounter with other cultures.
5. Novitiate formation on a multicultural level, promoting knowledge of the cultures living together: knowledge of the history of different countries, food, folklore, national holidays, Marian devotions and/or titles, etc. Openness to and respect for other cultures is intentionally worked on, an openness to be sent to any country is fostered in novices.
6. Gathering of young/newer members/ generational gathering. Creating opportunities for deeper conversation senior/younger sisters.
7. Focus where the energy is, but not totally leaving others behind. Example: The dream about the “train”. Going forward and be happy and rejoice for those who are ready. Continue to seek for the betterment of religious life.