

## INTRODUCTION TO INTERCULTURAL WORKSHOP

### A. TWO FOCAL QUESTIONS

1. Can you distinguish *international* and *intercultural*?
2. Can you distinguish *cross-cultural* and *multicultural*?

### B. PRELIMINARY THOUGHTS

1. *Intercultural* living is radically different from living in an *international* community.
  - It describes specifically, the way we live out our *faith/discipleship*.
2. There can be no faith *in theory*; only existentially: it must be lived.
  - Faith is expressed *in practice*, as discipleship (“lived faith”).
3. But faith can *only* be expressed through culture, culturally.
  - Contexts and persons are specific; as they change, so must our lived faith.
4. *Intercultural* living is authentic discipleship lived by culturally different people together.
  - The language – *cultural, multi-cultural, cross-cultural* – needs to be clarified.
5. *Intercultural living* is not a *problem* but a *challenge (opportunity)*; not ‘*theirs*’ but ‘*ours*’.
  - Impossible in an US/THEM world (opposed) but only in a WE world (integrated)
6. Intercultural living is not natural but it is possible: perhaps “supernatural.”
  - It is unequivocally *faith-based living*, not just acquiring new techniques.
7. It is not easy but it is desirable [God desires it] and urgently needed.
  - If one culture is not to dominate, *everyone* is called to conversion.
8. It needs full commitment and hard work; good will is not enough.
  - Historically, religious “good will” alone has perpetrated disaster and injustice
9. It requires compromise, real dialogue, and a clear and common vision.
  - Intercultural community cannot be built on autocratic, dogmatic leadership.
10. Intentional intercultural living is *something new* for most people.
  - The overwhelming majority of humans are monocultural [we explore this later].
11. Intercultural living is the future of international religious life.
  - Unless international communities become intercultural, they will not survive.
12. Intercultural living is not only for international communities.
  - It constitutes a challenge for everyone in ministry to “the other.”
13. This requires/produces a revolution in religious life (living): both *new* and *obligatory*.

## THREE PRINCIPLES AND THE AIM OF THE WORKSHOP

### C. THREE GUIDING PRINCIPLES

1. We are called to build a Home where all can live and everyone belongs.
  - Jonathan Sacks' (*The Home We Build Together*) contrasts: the family home is an evolving, organic entity, with rights and duties, accountability, and mutual respect.
  - "If identity resembles a hotel, identity will be, not in integration but in separation" (82).
2. God creates difference. Therefore difference is GOOD (Sacks, *The Dignity of Difference*).
  - Difference must be *negotiated*, consistent with the community's sustaining vision.
  - We do not survive or manage *despite* our differences, but *within* them.
3. God created an inclusive community (Gen 3:8). But every culture, humanity, or "*original sin*" – divides community and opposes people (woman/man, rich/poor, haves/have-nots, etc).
  - This is the "cultural flaw" which undermines harmony and peace.
  - Everyone had *sin* and *grace*. Our cultures and communities are redeemable, but need redemption or will collapse.
  - "Peace involves a profound crisis of identity. The boundaries of self and other, friend and foe, must be re-drawn" (J. Sacks).

### D. PURPOSE OF THE WORKSHOP

1. To shift us from *dialectical* (either/or; one is right/the other is wrong) to *analogical* (both/and, compromise can be striven for and attained) thinking.
  - "In a Jesus society, you repent, not by feeling bad but by thinking [and acting] differently" (R. Wiebe).
  - "We have just enough religion to make us hate one another, but not enough to make us love one another" (Jonathan Swift). This *must* change.
2. To face, as religious, the urgent task of identifying and learning the skills and virtues necessary for living as intercultural communities, despite the challenge this presents to every one of us. It is the Gospel call to conversion, but it offers a particular challenge to today's religious, especially those socialized in strongly ego-focused and rights-based cultures.