

HISTORY OF THE INTERNATIONAL GRAIL 1921 – 1979

A Short Description by
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Materials prepared by The Grail History
Project are intended for use by members
of The Grail: to assist them in under-
standing or recalling the background of
The Grail in different countries, to
show how The Grail in the 1980s came
into being over a sixty year period,
to develop a sense among members of
The Grail that the similarities and
differences they experience emerge out
of a complex history, to assist them
in describing The Grail to persons who
are interested in becoming members of
The Grail.

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Our gratitude goes to Rachel Donders who has researched and written this History of the Grail as a service for the whole Movement.

Rachel has been close to many of the events she writes about. She was a part of the Grail Youth Movement from the early thirties and witnessed the expansion of the Grail to Germany, England, Australia, Scotland and the United States. During the time of her Presidency, from 1949 - 61, much of the activity and development of the Movement in Latin America, Africa and Asia took place. From 1962 - 75 Rachel worked in Japan and since 1977 she has been at the Prayer Centre in Jerusalem.

This contribution is not a definitive history; much of it was born out of Rachel's own life experience and reflection. We hope it will encourage other Grail members to study and write about our heritage, about the growth and direction of Grail vision throughout the years, about the lives of some of the women who shaped and were shaped by the Grail.

The main aim of this present history-writing effort is to provide learning material for members who have come into the Grail in more recent years or for women exploring Grail participation. We think it is important that all of us know and appreciate our roots and that we recognize how currents and events have influenced our development. A second publication is to appear soon, providing short histories of countries where the Grail is currently active. Please note that both productions are for use and distribution within the Grail membership.

We would be glad to hear how you have made use of this material and to have your suggestions for further work on Grail history.

Joan Dilworth

October, 1983

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CHAPTER I 1921-1928

BEGINNINGS

THE POSITION OF CATHOLICS IN THE NETHERLANDS

It happens from time to time in the history of a country that a mentality, long pre-occupied with a certain idea, suddenly swings to a new focus of interest and action. Such a swing took place in the mentality of the Catholics in The Netherlands during and shortly after the First World War. A new generation had come onto the scene, ready for a great apostolic effort. For them it was no longer a question of defending the Faith, as in the decades before, but of announcing it.

For centuries, in fact since the Reformation, Catholics in most parts of The Netherlands had been forced to lead a ghetto life: no freedom of worship, no social status, no opportunity for higher studies, no leadership in any cultural field, no access to a position in public life was allowed to them. They had had no bishops from the end of the 16th century till 1853, and had been dependent on the pastoral care of a small number of priests who travelled around the country, often in secret.

Since the coming of democracy, however, towards the end of the 19th century, and more particularly since the restoration of the Catholic Hierarchy (1853), conditions had become better. Catholics,

together with their fellow citizens, gained political rights; they even won seats in the government (off and on from 1889). They could build their own churches and freely worship in them. They could establish seminaries, convents, schools, works of charity; they were free to set up their own press, and to organise themselves in groups and institutions for all sorts of purposes.

All this they did. But the result was that, liberated from the ghetto, they now found themselves in a fortress, one of their own making, in which they aimed to be safe from the evil influences of the world.

It was against this fortress-complex, this defensive Christianity, this siege mentality as it has been called in England, this isolation from the thoughts and culture of the time, this mistrust of every current, that a number of exceptional personalities, lay people and priests, stood up. They launched a wave of fresh and daring initiatives in the field of social action and cultural creativity, and established a dialogue between the spirit of the time and Christianity. One of them was the young Jesuit, Jacques van Ginneken.

JACQUES VAN GINNEKEN

Born in 1877 in a small town in the South of The Netherlands called Oudenbosch, Jacques received a good Catholic and also practical education. This was mainly through the efforts of his mother, determined as she was to let him take over the business of his father who had died when the boy was five years old. But already in his teenage years Jacques felt a strong call to give himself to God, in His service, for the world. After some opposition his mother gave in, and from then on she supported him in his vocation, to his everlasting gratitude. After brilliant studies in Dutch Language and Literature at the University of Leiden, a serious time of spiritual and ascetic formation as a novice of the Jesuit Order, and several years of recuperating from a recurring attack of lung tuberculosis in convalescent homes in Germany and Holland, we find him around 1920 in the vigour of his life. He was a teacher in a boys' college, the usual task for a Jesuit, and already a scholar well known in Europe in the field of philology. In addition, he was also known in The Netherlands itself for his deep concern with the spiritual climate of the time and the promise it seemed to hold for a new élan, especially among the laity.

In 1922 Pope Pius XI, in a Motu Proprio "Ubi Arcano Dei," called for a concerted effort of the laity to join the priests in work for the spreading of the Kingdom of Christ. This was the beginning of the official organised lay apostolate (Catholic Action). It was an affirmation of what was already happening.

With all his heart, burning with a genuine love for Jesus Christ, Jacques van Ginneken sought to challenge the new forces of radicalism and outgoingness, to give them the depth they needed, to nourish them with the vision of God's plan of redemption through the Cross of Christ. He was convinced of the great possibilities of the time. "There passes through the modern world a spiritual current which leads to Catholicism," he declared in Rotterdam for an audience of non-Catholics. But this current

had to be supported and carried forward by people in the midst of the world.

"Why is the world not yet converted? Why does she turn her back on Christ's Cross? It is because Christians have no fervour. The heart of the Gospel message, the Sermon on the Mount, they leave to monks and saints! In order now to raise a current, a movement towards God, people are needed who give themselves to God in the midst of the world - who precisely there lead a life radically different from what the world expects, people who bring the Cross of Christ back among humanity."

(From a conference in 1918)

In 1919 he had brought together in Utrecht an Action Committee for the Conversion of The Netherlands. Two years earlier, he had inaugurated at the request of his Jesuit superiors, conferences for non-Catholics; these were also the substance of the Retreats for non-Catholics conducted by him and several other priests in different parts of the country. It was this initiative which brought him in contact with a number of women, younger and older, married and single, who were looking for a way to use their talents and influence for a greater cause than the maintaining of a bourgeois, respectable standard of life, in the safe fortress of a defensive faith.

OPENING-UP FOR WOMEN

A certain feminism had already appeared in those years. More and more women were being employed in factories and offices; higher studies and liberal professions were opening up for them. They had gained the right to vote and had been eligible for parliament since 1917.

A beginning had been made by Catholic women to come together in an organisation called the 'Vrouwenbond' (Women's League). At first its main orientation was spiritual, but later it was also concerned with political and social formation of the members. Then there were convents where women gave themselves to works of charity, education, care for the sick and so on. But at that time the walls around them were still high, the gates firmly locked, the habits and headgear of an unusual style, the rules and regulations literally 'out of this world' and the leadership masculine, clerical.

It was a former soldier of the Salvation Army, a young woman of fervour and initiative, who opened Father van Ginneken's eyes to a new form of committed Christian life for women, one in the midst of the world. She simply told him that since her baptism in the Catholic Church she painfully missed the opportunity to witness, and to do so publicly, directly.

An eye-opener indeed. Searching in the sources of Christian life, Father van Ginneken found an answer to her complaint in writings from the first Christian era: "Even when a woman has to be silent in the Church, she is

allowed to speak to the pagans," he read in the "De Catechizandis Rudibus" of St. Augustine.

And 'pagans' there were, especially in the big cities, numbers of them. For almost a century there had been a migration from the traditionally Catholic rural South of The Netherlands, 'Below the Rivers,' to the predominantly Protestant cities of the West and North. This current had greatly increased because of the misery and poverty in the wake of a crisis in agriculture and because of the lure of employment in the newly-founded industries North of the rivers. Thousands and thousands of Catholic families from the South settled around Amsterdam, Rotterdam, The Hague - with disastrous results for their religious practice. Cut off from their milieu, those who did not have an intense faith remembered their religion as a set of stereotyped habits, to be completely discarded in this new world. The Church was scarcely aware of this problem till about 1912 when some initial research was made. And in the meantime the first propagandists of Socialism, then coming up strongly, recruited many of the migrants.

Although Father van Ginneken was more geared towards a cultivated public in his conferences and retreats, he turned his apostolic heart with great zeal towards those masses and especially towards the youth. Within a short time he founded three groups of lay people whom he inspired with his ideal of 'bringing the pagan child of the modern big cities to Christ.'

THREE FOUNDATIONS

One foundation, called "The Society of the Women of Bethany," was to collect young children in attractive centres in the working class areas of The Hague, Amsterdam and Rotterdam. These children were to be instructed in the Catholic faith, and hopefully, with their parents' consent, led to the joy of baptism. Then, when they came to the age of leaving primary school and started work in a factory or workshop, a new approach to their continued formation was needed - so Father van Ginneken thought. For this he founded two other lay societies. One was for men and was called the "Crusaders of St. John"; they were to take care of boys of 14 years and upwards, helping them to learn a trade. The other was for women, "The Society of the Women of Nazareth," with the purpose of teaching a trade and the necessary domestic science to girls of that age. At the same time these Women of Nazareth were supposed to help with the retreats for non-Catholics by maintaining a retreat house.

To get ahead of the story:

Of these three foundations the Society of the Women of Bethany did not maintain its lay character. In 1932 it was officially recognized by Rome as a religious congregation. In the course of the years the activities and services of its members have become more diversified, but their main orientation of openness towards people of other confessions has remained up to the present day. The Crusaders of St. John developed into a society for the vocational training of boys, with a stress on the underprivileged. In 1950 they took the status of a Secular Institute.

As for the Society of the Women of Nazareth, the following pages tell the story of its first years, the story of a group of women whose life in that period has been called 'the seed in the earth.'

It was this seed which would bring forth in due time, through seasons of sunshine and rain, a new flowering in God's garden of the world: a women's movement, the International Grail.

'THE FIRSTLINGS'

For several years since its foundation on November 1st, 1921, the small group of the 'firstlings,' as Father van Ginneken used to call them, had its motherhouse in an old country house called Overvoorde, later in De Voorde in Rijswijk, a suburb of The Hague. There retreats for non-Catholics were conducted by Father van Ginneken and other priests, and a number of working class girls also learned a trade while receiving instruction in the Catholic faith. The small community had to struggle to remain alive, for there was very little income, little stability, little increase in members, and the founder was no longer nearby. In 1923 Father van Ginneken had been called to Nymegen to take the professorship in Dutch Language and Literature, Comparative Indo-Germanic Philology and Sanskrit at the newly erected Catholic University, the crown on the emancipation process of the Catholics in the Netherlands.

For him this meant that for the sake of academic work he had to say farewell to his retreat work, to the trade catechumenate and to the guidance of his foundations. Another Jesuit, Father J. van Rijckevorsel, took over from him and moved into De Voorde, a fine man, spiritual and sensitive, but the little group sorely missed the breadth of vision and the infectious optimism of the founder. However, they kept together and held on: Miriam Meertens, the very first member, Margaret van Gilse, who soon became the superior of the group, Martha van Zelst, Theresia van Boxtel and Agnes Feldhege. They knew that even from a distance the founder did not forget them, neither in his prayers and sacrifices, nor in his plans and hopes. And these were growing worldwide.



International President:
Margaret van Gilse

Among his many ideas Father van Ginneken cherished the concept of a higher institute of learning for the women of the Indonesian Archipelago. It was to be located on the island of Java, famed for its old Hindu culture. The institute would be based not on Western tradition, but along Asian lines, permeated by Eastern vision and culture and using Sanskrit and Javanese languages.

Four of his young women students at the University of Nymegen responded enthusiastically to this idea: Lydwine van Kersbergen, Mia van der Kallen, Elisabeth Allard, Louise Veldhuis. They came to De Voorde in Rijswijk in 1926. Soon they were joined by Yvonne Bosch van Drakestein, Gré Hackenitz, Clara Trel and Debora Judith Bouwman. All of them were ready for a spiritual preparation which would lead to a great task in the worldwide apostolate! It is interesting to note that this very first group was already of international composition, Margaret van Gilse being Belgian and Agnes Feldhege being German.

However, for the time being they had to live and work in silence and prayer in a cold and leaky house and were involved in the trade catechumenate for Dutch working class girls. Pending preparations for their venture in Java, they took the initiative to start working in a chocolate factory and a cigarette factory in The Hague, with the aim of training small apostolic groups in the industrial world.

A BASIC CHANGE

The Society of the Women of Nazareth came under the jurisdiction of the Bishop of Haarlem, in whose diocese the members were at work. It was Bishop A. Callier who in 1921 had given permission to Father van Ginneken to start his foundation. The same Bishop in 1926 approved the written Constitution for the Society, composed by Father van Ginneken. Thus everything in relation to the official Church seemed settled. But a big change lay in store. When Bishop Callier died in 1928 Rome appointed as his successor a sociologist and professor of the major seminary, Professor J. Aengenent, writer of the first Catholic handbook on sociology in The Netherlands.

An old Dutch proverb says: "New Lords - New Laws" and indeed a whole new period started. The new Bishop of Haarlem, Bishop Aengenent, after having made a survey of his diocese, called the Women of Nazareth for an important discussion. He told them that, for pastoral and practical reasons, he had decided to ask them to give up their work for non-Catholics, to stop the trade catechumenate, the factory work and the assistance in the retreats for non-Catholics. Instead he asked them to turn their full attention to the Catholic girls of the diocese who needed much more education than was provided in their parish meetings; it was the care of this youth which he wanted to entrust to them.

This call of the Bishop made 1928 a red-letter year, a true watershed in the history of the Women of Nazareth. With great pain and anxiety they obeyed and began to wind up their original work. It was of course Father van Ginneken who inspired a new approach. Although he too was deeply shaken by the request of the Bishop, it was characteristic for his spirit of optimism that he soon came to a vision of great possibilities for the apostolate. "Are they asking us to educate the feminine working class youth?" he asked. "Well, I have an idea: let us make it into a movement, a movement for the conversion of the world!"

And so it happened. In answer to Bishop Aengenent's wish the decision was taken to organise the Catholic girls into a modern youth movement, to be called "The Grail." Its purpose would be: to win the world for Christ!

In other circles too, there were new initiatives to activate young people. In 1916 Dr. H. Poels, one of the leaders of the new elan in the Church and a friend of Father van Ginneken, had started "De Jonge Werkman" (The Young Worker) for the christianisation of the workers' milieu and society. That was already something quite different from the 'youth care' exerted in the so called 'patronages'. These were gatherings of youngsters, boys and girls separated, in parish halls, under the supervision of a priest. They were mostly for recreation, with the purpose of keeping the young people off the streets and thus protecting them from bad influences. The "Young Workers," and similar groups scattered here and there in the dioceses of The Netherlands, had more positive and dynamic ideas. There was "De Heemvaart," (1923) a movement among Catholic university students who reached out for deeper values embedded in Christian culture; they were seeking their own style of life, in conscious reaction against values and standards of the older generation. The Boy Scouts and Girl Guide movements (England 1902) which counteracted the Victorian way of life also had quite a lot of attraction. But the most fervent idealists in The Netherlands at the time were the young Socialists in their 'A.J.C.' (Workers Youth Centrum). People could see them, especially on Sundays, setting out under red banners, dressed in unconventional corduroy and sandals, free and joyful with their flutes and mandolins, going to 'celebrate nature.' They were truly the opposite of everything bourgeois. They were convinced that the union of the proletariat was going to bring about universal concord, that an era would come, through their sacrifices and sowing, in which according to their great poet Henriette Roland Holst, "All the world would go singing to the Feast of Labour."

FIRST PLANS FOR THE GRAIL

It was against this background that the old house De Voorde became the first Grail Centre. There Lydwine van Kersbergen, Mia van der Kallen, Liesbeth Allard, Martha van Zelst and Gré Hackenitz, with Margaret van Gilse ('Moeder Marguérite') as the wise superior in the background, began to work out plans for the Grail Youth Movement. Soon new people presented themselves at De Voorde, all young, in their early twenties, and ready for anything! They were Ruth Bernard, Lucy de Bruyn, Hilda Canters, Hedwig Meertens, Marijke Peeters, Hermine Standenmeijer, Geertruid Sweere and Emma Verwey.

Bishop Aengenent, well aware of the real sacrifice he had asked of them, supported the young group firmly. However, there was one thing which was not to his liking: some of the most capable members of the Society of the Women of Nazareth were at work outside his diocese, on the island of Java in present day Indonesia. Yvonne Bosch van Drakestein and Clara Trel were in the pioneering group there, somewhat later joined or replaced by Miriam Meertens, Louise Veldhuis and others. Bishop Aengenent deemed that the time was not ripe for such an expansion. Gradually over the course of some years, the work in Java was phased out and the pioneers were called back to The Netherlands.

And so, once more, a new start was made, born out of the years of struggle in the dark. Three elements which would form the guiding lines for the movement all through the coming years had already begun to be seen and learned by the firstlings:

- The world has been saved by the Cross; the grain of wheat has to die before bearing fruit;
- Women, coming more and more into their own, must shoulder their task in responsibility for the world, in their own way;
- The events of the time have a meaning for those who listen; the Spirit is at work in the historic situation.

For a more detailed story of this period see Grail Publications:

The Seed in the Ground. The story of the very beginnings by Gerti Lauscher.

The Life of Professor Doctor Jacques van Ginneken, S.J. (1877-1945) by Rachel Donders.

For more insight into the historic situation in The Netherlands:

Histoire du Catholicisme Hollandais depuis le XVIe siecle par Pierre Brachin et L. J. Rogier. Aubier Montaigne, 1974.

CHAPTER II 1928-1932

GRAIL YOUTH MOVEMENT, ITS RISE AND FIRST PERFORMANCE

The change in direction of the Society of the Women of Nazareth came just before the beginning of the thirties, in a period of confusion in Western Europe: crises in the economic and social field, unemployment and pauperism among the masses, the rise of fascist movements with Mussolini and Hitler, anti-semitism, and everywhere immense spiritual anguish. The Netherlands shared all this turmoil. Still there was also a potentiality for idealism and enthusiasm, waiting to be called up, challenged and given form, especially among the young.

RESPONSE TO THE FIRST CALL

As soon as word went out that a youth movement for Catholic girls was in the making, hundreds of young women - many of them already engaged in some form of youth care and aware of the needs - flocked to the meetings, organised mostly by Lydwine van Kersbergen and Mia van der Kallen, in the different cities of the diocese of Haarlem. They wanted to hear more about it; many of them joined and with the Women of Nazareth formed the first leadership corps for the new movement.

Step by step, in 1928 and 1929, apartments and houses were rented, first in Amsterdam, Rotterdam and The Hague, later in Haarlem, Leiden, Delft, Schiedam and Alkmaar. Through the media of that time, newspapers and parish bulletins, and by word of mouth, the message spread: "Come together, girls, young women! You are needed! You have qualities and talents, you can help change the world!"

Bishop Aengenent urged the priests, and through them the laity, to support the young initiative. In 1930 he even proclaimed the Grail Youth Movement, under the leadership of the Women of Nazareth, to be the only Catholic youth movement for girls in his diocese.

FORMULATION OF AIM AND STRUCTURE

In that same year Statutes of the Grail Youth Movement were published in the official diocesan periodical, "St. Bavo":

- "1) The aim of the Grail Youth Movement is to organise all Catholic adolescent girls, not only to protect them from dangers, but primarily to train them to be fervent Catholic women who are an example in everything. Members and leaders must be inspired by a spirit of apostolate and direct action. This is the spirit which must direct their training.
- 2) This training consists of:
 - a. a religious, moral training.
 - b. a training for citizenship to prepare them for the future task which they as Catholic wives and mothers will have to fulfill in the family and in society.
- 3) The organisation is not maintained by charity, dependent upon accidental support or gifts; it must be conducted on a stable income and with monetary contributions from the leaders and members.
- 4) The organisation shall take care of the religious, social and economic interests of the young working women."

As for Structures, the following outline was given:

- "1) The Grail Youth Movement works under the direction of the Women of Nazareth, a group of lay women who have given themselves for life to the apostolate of the Grail.
- 2) Around the Women of Nazareth five groups are formed:
 - a. Temporary helpers who live together with the Women of Nazareth and who are able to take over all their functions if necessary. The Women of Nazareth and their helpers are recruited from all social classes. In their centres there is no class distinction.
 - b. The Young Guard, an elite of educated young women, who after some spiritual training, put themselves at the disposal of the Grail. They will serve as artistic and technical leaders of groups in different places.
 - c. Local leaders.
 - d. Members proper, from 15 years up
 - e. Aspirants, from 13 years up.

- 3) A diocesan headquarters is established. Furthermore, headquarters will be established in every city, with interparochial centres and centres near mills and factories.
- 4) All finances are centrally administered by the Diocesan Grail Headquarters."

Thus the movement was organised along diocesan lines and on an inter-parochial basis.

LIFE IN THE GRAIL YOUTH CENTRES

Does this sound somewhat stilted and abstract? The reality was full of life, enthusiasm, youthfulness. The 'Grail houses,' as the centres in cities and towns were called, were beehives of activity where programmes were stimulated by a small team of three or four Women of Nazareth, many of them still 'novices.' Part of the formation of those who joined the Women of Nazareth was to assist in the Grail houses, together with the temporary helpers. Evening after evening the rooms were filled with girls, happy to meet and to have found a task and opportunity to develop their personalities.

Each beehive also had a 'still point,' a chapel or prayer room, where the girls came to pray, alone or in groups, and for ceremonies like the receiving of their badges. The first badge, a small enamelled pin depicting a Grail chalice, was received after a period of initiation. After some more practice and experience as Grail Youth Movement members, a second badge could be obtained. It had a Grail chalice and cross, a sign that they had understood more deeply the meaning of the Cross in life. There were two more spiritual levels of membership after that: one based on the idea of vicarious suffering and the next on the striving for a life of total dedication in undivided love for God.

Besides participating in cultural, social and recreational activities, the girls attended weekly meetings in small groups in which they learned more about life as Christian women. They learned about the Cross and Christ's redeeming work, their task in furthering the work of Christ and the role of the Spirit of Love in awakening a response to the needs of the times. In discussions they shared their experiences and helped each other to see the practical consequences in daily life. Thus they grew in more conscious Christian practice.

A magazine began to be published as a means of drawing all together and of deepening the spirit. Called "De Zilveren Trompet" (The Silver Trumpet), it appeared twice a month. It included statements on the general programme of the Grail Youth Movement, information on new developments, articles on the role of great women in history, repeated emphasis on the meaning of the Grail spirit, useful advice on every level of interest to the members, and articles and reports from the small groups. It was the Grail member's favourite paper and appeared until 1940.

SOCIAL CONCERNS

The Women of Nazareth, now fully occupied in the Grail Youth Movement, remained faithful to their original interest in the well-being of those

young girls who after World War I were drawn in masses to the factories with their attractive wages and shorter working hours. From experience they knew about the conditions in which these girls had to work. A systematic study was undertaken by a few Women of Nazareth which showed that practically no factory owner had ever considered the necessity of changing certain material conditions as a consequence of employing women. The precise facts and specific examples revealed by their research won, after some struggle, the Government's support in the form of better protective legislation. A series of articles on women's labour in The Netherlands by Mia vander Kallen appeared in the Dutch Catholic Press. Due to these efforts, the Government enlarged the number of labour inspectors in enterprises employing women. A proposal, formulated by Mia, entitled "The Family and the Working Girl," was accepted by the Dutch Catholic Political Party, and became part of its social programme.

About that same time the Grail Youth Movement opened in Amsterdam an Employment Office for girls and a Vocational Guidance Bureau; both fulfilled important functions till 1942. Young girls who applied there were placed in suitable jobs where their material and moral interests were protected.

DE TILTENBERG - PLACE OF RESOURCEMENT

In the year 1931, less than three years after the change in direction, three events stand out. One of them was the establishment of a place of spiritual resourcement to support the action in the centres. The Women of Nazareth had previously left De Voorde and had made their temporary living quarters in the Diocesan Grail house in Scheveningen.



De Tiltenberg

Now they moved into "De Tiltenberg," their new motherhouse, built at the border of the dunes and the tulipfields of Vogelenzang, between Haarlem and Leiden. This house was not to be a beehive of action, but a place of silence, prayer, interiority, penance, study of the sources of Christian life, for periods of retreat and individual reflection. "Zielevacantie," Father van Ginneken had called such periods, "holiday of the soul."

Every Woman of Nazareth involved in the apostolate came regularly to this place of withdrawal for spiritual resourcement. The young women who presented themselves to join the Society, many of them from the ranks of the local Grail leadership, received a spiritual training and preparation for their life-long dedication at this place.

Dutch young women who joined the Women of Nazareth in the years of the Grail Youth Movement and who still may be known by the present generation are* Felicitas Bosman, Persis Bremer+, Justa Bulte, Angela Buys+, Paula Buitenman+, Helen van Cleef, Rachel Donders, Josepha Gall, Sylvia Goes, Dé Groothuizen, Ine Hillebrand, Brigid Huizinga, Bep Huiskens, Monica Jansen+, Sabina Kerkhoff, Geertruid Krijnen, Teresa Langemeijer+, Mechtild van Langen, Kiek Larey+, Gerti Lauscher, Lydia Mulders+, Ans Coebergh van de Braak+, Daniela Mensink+, Joan Overboss+, Coleta van der Ploeg+, Jacoba Schaper, Ifis Seijbel+, Syntiche van Soest, Suze Swarte, Ingrid van Wayenburg, Maria van Will+, Mathilde de Wit+, Ria Weteling. There were many more who spent some time of spiritual formation at the Tiltenberg, but who later chose another road than that of the Women of Nazareth. Many of them remained in touch in friendship and collaboration.

Margaret van Gilse, still called "Mother Marguérite," as the superior of the Society of the Women of Nazareth, had her office at the Tiltenberg. She guided the little flock with warmheartedness and strength, vision and courage. While Lydwine, Mia, Debora and other leaders travelled around and appeared in public to inspire and lead the movement, Mother Marguérite was in the background, but kept her finger on the pulse of the movement. No decisions about placements of the leaders, opening of new houses, finances or new activities were made without her. She deeply influenced the whole with her spiritual wisdom and clear insights.

EASTER MESSAGE IN THE STADIUM OF AMSTERDAM

Then, in the same year, a second meaningful event took place. The young movement took the risk of bringing together 3000 of its members from the different cities and towns, in the big Olympic Stadium in Amsterdam, to witness there to what was alive for them. Speaking choruses were 'in' at that time; every movement, and especially the Socialists, tried to give expression to their ideals in communally spoken words and synchronized gestures. The Grail Youth Movement did so in its turn. In those dreary, hard times of social unrest, political change and spiritual anguish, its members came forward with a message of hope, an Easter message.

Was there any way to cope with the great problem of suffering in the world? in every person's life? Was there a road to true inward happiness, not just depending on material circumstances, universal, for all people?

Yes, was the answer, take 'The Royal Road of the Holy Cross.' The text of this speaking chorus was taken from Chapter 12 of the second part of the spiritual classic "The Imitation of Christ." For almost a year

* a + indicates a member who has died.

the Grail members in their own groups and centres had entered into the spirit of the text, had learned to apply it to their daily lives, had found some of the joyful inner freedom which comes from surrender and self-giving. Truthfully they could speak this text and witness to its deep meaning to the thousands of spectators in the Stadium on Easter Monday 1931.

It was a real spiritual experience for participants and spectators. Letters and communications received by the Women of Nazareth till long after the day itself showed that God's grace had touched many hearts through it. There were conversions, vocations, and a wave of gratitude among many Catholics who saw these demonstrations as a sign of renewed spiritual life in the Church.

OUTPOSTS IN THE RURAL AREAS

A third notable happening in the year 1931 was the expansion of the Grail Youth Movement from the cities to the rural areas. October 18 was the day of the 'village journeys.' Teams of leaders from the different city centres swarmed out on bicycles to the villages in the surrounding districts, in order to make the Grail Youth Movement known to the young women there. On that one day 70 outposts were established; later, by 1934, this number had grown to 89. For some time teams from the cities continued to go regularly to those areas to foster growth and consolidation, but gradually leadership developed among the young women of the villages. The Grail Outposts formed a network within the movement and a separate section for farmers' daughters was established called 'Het Groene Gilde' (The Green Guild).

FATHER VAN GINNEKEN'S INSPIRATIONAL SUPPORT

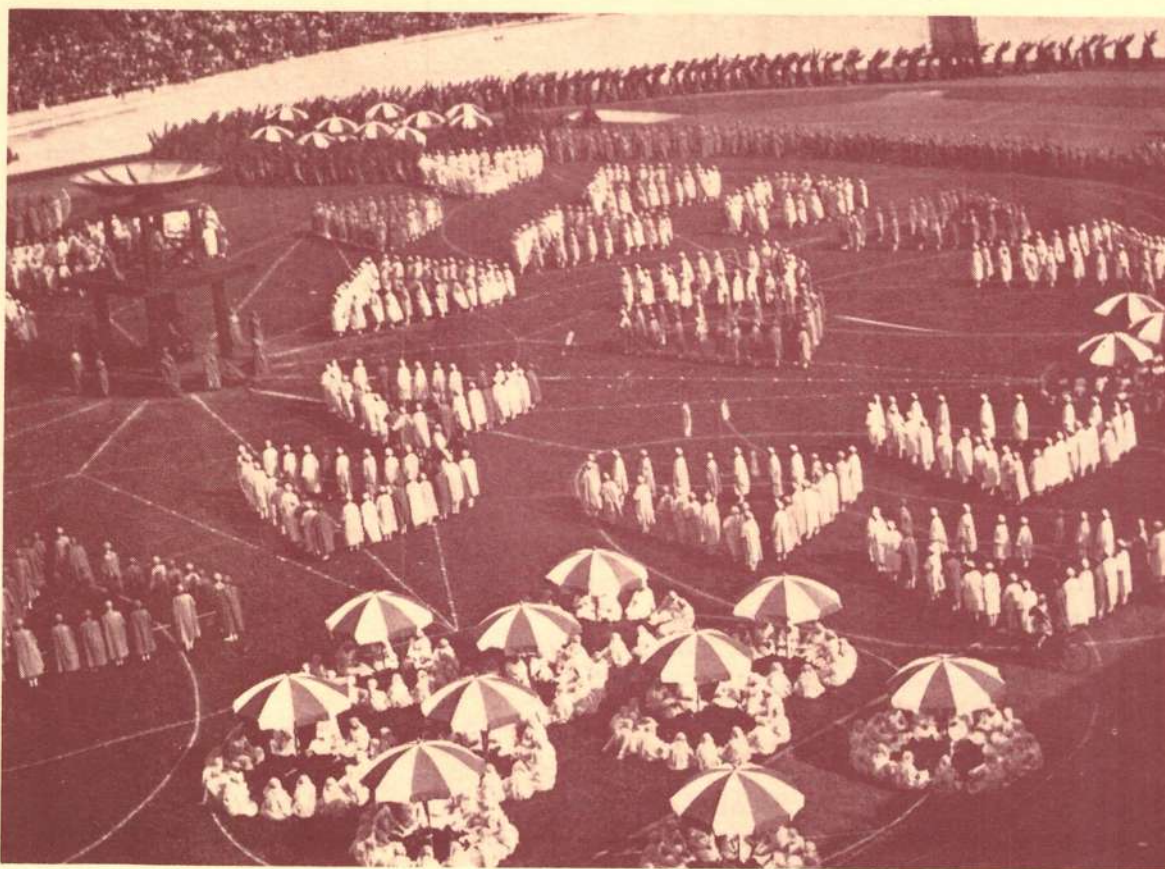
Behind all these efforts stood the constant support and inspiration of the founder of the Women of Nazareth, Father van Ginneken. Although fully occupied with his academic work, he found time to receive the main leaders now and again in the Jesuit rectory in Nymegen. During a study-journey to Austria and Germany, he wrote inspiring letters to the whole community. His total vision and hope for women in the conversion of the world he developed mainly in a series of sixty four conferences. Of these, thirty two were given as a retreat based on the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius, and thirty two as a course on the apostolate of women, based on his studies of history, ethnology, psychology and contemporary currents. He gave these lectures, four a day, at the Tiltenberg in the summer of 1932. They were recorded - by primitive standards as we would judge now, but nevertheless very accurately - on wax gramophone discs. These were later transcribed, a source of inspiration for a long time to come.

PENTECOST 1932, A MESSAGE OF LOVE

Encouraged by the reactions to the "Royal Road of the Holy Cross" and seeing the great value of such productions for a deeper initiation of all members into a true Christian life, the leaders began to prepare for another mass performance in the Amsterdam Stadium. This time there were 10,000 participants, members, aspirants, and 'Children of the Cross' - a new section of 12 year olds who had their own programmes after school.

This play, called 'Pinksterzegen' (Pentecost Blessing), expressed the theme of the descent of the Spirit of Love over the world. In word, gesture, song and interpretive dance, performed by fifteen choruses and unfolding in scene after scene, it spoke of the people's longing for love, of earthly ideals and of the following of Christ. In the last and one of the most beautiful parts, the total group of 10,000 girls gathered in colourful formation around the monumental Grail chalice in the centre of the Stadium and promised to win the world for Him through love and sacrifice.

Pentecost Play, 1932.



For a more detailed description of the periods dealt with in Chapters II, III, IV and V see:

The Grail Youth Movement in The Netherlands, a dissertation submitted to the faculty of the School of Social Science of the Catholic University of America in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts. Washington, D.C. July 1957. by Frederica C. Bulte.

"A Short History of the Grail" in Grail Review. Vol. V. No. 4. 1963, pages 1-17. by Eleanor Walker.

CHAPTER III 1932-1936

GRAIL YOUTH MOVEMENT, WIDENING SCOPE

To win the world! Would that be possible with a movement of very ordinary young girls, at work in one diocese of a small country? Should there not be some wider scope?

A wider field began to open up indeed. The young leaders used every opportunity to witness to their convictions. There were publicity tours almost every weekend - silent processions on Ember Days and on the Eve of All Saints Day in honour of all holy women in history - speaking choruses on city squares to explain what the Grail stood for - articles in newspapers - speeches for the leaders of other groups and organisations - and in 1932 two hundred members took part in the International Eucharistic Congress in Dublin, Ireland.

Through its public appearances the Movement drew the attention of people concerned with youth in other countries of Western Europe. It was through this that the 'Round Table' of the Grail, the Head Committee of the Grail Youth Movement at the Tiltenberg, received a request from Bishop C. Schreiber of Berlin, Germany, to start a similar movement, particularly among women students and artists, in that diocese.

BEGINNINGS IN BERLIN, GERMANY

Lydwine van Kersbergen and Mia van der Kallen had already been in contact with student circles and social leaders in Germany in the previous year.* Now Margaret van Gilse appointed Mia as the leader of the small band of Women of Nazareth who travelled to Berlin to start the Grail. Methods similar to the ones experimented with in The Netherlands were applied: attractive centres furnished in a sober style, colourful uniforms and banners to call attention to the joyful fervour of youth, publicity tours and outings. Behind it all was the call to enter in this time more deeply into the mystery of the redemption through the Cross. Almost from the start, preparations began for the "Rorate Play." The title was taken from the Advent song, "Rorate" based on Isaiah's "Bedew us, heavens, from above." The theme of the play expressed the longing of the human race for liberation from misery, its meeting with the stern message of John the Baptist (Do works of penance), and the joyful announcement of a new day of salvation in Jesus Christ incarnate, a joy first sung by Our Lady in the Magnificat.

On January 8, 1933, twelve hundred girls performed this play in Berlin's enormous Sport Palast for seventeen thousand spectators. The four hundred German girls were supported by eight hundred Dutch Grail members who for months had been studying German and their parts in the play. They took a weekend off from their usual work to travel to and from Berlin by night train. This was the concrete beginning of international meetings and collaboration in the Grail.* *

DEVELOPMENT IN DEPTH

In 1933 The Netherlands celebrated the fifth centenary of the death of St. Lydwina of Schiedam, the great (and only) Dutch woman saint. Not surprisingly, the Grail was asked by the Church authorities to perform a play, and April 1933 saw seven thousand Grail members in the Stadium in Schiebroek, near Rotterdam, acting out the life of the young girl, Lydwina, who after a fall on the ice while skating, suffered for thirty three years and died a saint. One of the deepest truths, impressed on all the participants in the many months of preparation, was the idea that God asks everyone to fulfill a definite task, a role in the work for His Kingdom, to render Him a special service, personal, irreplaceable, as Cardinal Newman had said.

"Lord, let me grow to be that for which Thou has destined me," already a long known and cherished Grail prayer, became from then on an ever-deeper ingrained guide-line for the life of the spirit of thousands of people.

* In 1931 a Jesuit in Cologne, Father Spieker, brought them in contact with a young woman, Hanna Arens - who promptly travelled to the Tiltenberg and joined.

** The subsequent development of the Grail Youth Movement in Germany, its dissolvment by the Nazis and its revival as a women's movement after the Second World War is described in a separate publication.

BEGINNINGS IN LONDON, ENGLAND, AS LADIES OF THE GRAIL

One of the dignitaries who attended the Lydwina Play was Cardinal F. Bourne, Archbishop of Westminster in England. Deeply interested in the role of the laity and convinced that women had a special role to fulfill, he had already invited the Women of Nazareth to London after their participation in the Eucharistic Congress in Dublin 1932. Lydwine van Kersbergen and Yvonne Bosch van Drakestein, with a few other Dutch Women of Nazareth, were appointed to begin a movement in England. The first Grail centre was opened in London in 1933 and the first public event was carried out in October of that same year. It was a performance of the medieval morality play "Everyman" in the Royal Albert Hall. About 300 Dutch Grail Youth Movement members travelled across the rough North Sea to assist the English members. They were led by Ifis Seijbel who, upon Lydwine's departure for England, had taken over as president of the Grail Youth Movement in The Netherlands.*

In England it was decided not to use the name 'Women of Nazareth.' This name, lovely as it was in the early days, with Father van Ginneken's inspiration that the members of this Society should combine an active and contemplative life like Our Lady in Nazareth, did not speak enough of the basic and organic relation between this group and the Grail Youth Movement. In England and later in Scotland the Women of Nazareth took the name 'Ladies of the Grail.' Under this name they remained fully united with the Society in The Netherlands under the leadership of Margaret van Gilse who became known as the 'International Leader.'



NEW STATUTES FOR THE GRAIL YOUTH MOVEMENT

Ifis Seijbel

After the period of the great mass plays and the enthusiastic drive for a dynamic youth movement, a clearer statement of its principles was needed in The Netherlands. New Statutes were drawn up in 1934 stating:

"The purpose of the movement is to train Catholic girls and young women of every social class and educational background to be real apostles, to aim together at self-sanctification, and to work together for the sanctification of others and the christianisation of society."

* Ifis Seijbel had returned from Java and was shortly afterwards followed by Miriam Meertens. Their work there had to be terminated at the wish of Bishop Aengenent.

In order to fulfill this purpose a threefold programme was formulated:

"The Grail Youth Movement is a religious movement, which educates its members to become fervent Catholic women and to be witnesses of their faith for the expansion of the Kingdom of Christ. It is a social movement, forming its members as women who are able to fulfill their task in society...It is a cultural movement, working for higher cultural expressions along Christian lines...."

At that same time Bishop Aengenent, who until then had been the spiritual director of the Movement, but whose health was failing, appointed as his representative Rev. A.M.A. Vollaerts, a professor of music at the minor seminary of Haarlem. Prof. Vollaerts became a member of the Central Board and fulfilled his function, until 1942, with great tact and prudence and with sincere respect for the womanly qualities and responsibilities at stake in the Movement.

DIFFICULTIES

So far everything sounds successful and happy. Were there no difficulties? no failures?

There were. The first members and their leaders had to cope with much criticism from different quarters and sometimes of completely divergent tendencies. Some people found the Grail Youth Movement far too spiritual, too radical in its methods, too extreme in the demands on its members. Others, on the contrary, judged the Grail to be a superficial movement, putting too much stress on externals and public demonstrations. The Dutch conservative concept of the role which a woman should play did not agree with the public appearances of the Youth Movement, with its flying banners, challenging speaking choruses and cheerful marching songs. Some people called it an unwomanly regimenting of young girls.

A cause of irritation in some circles was the fact that the Bishop of Haarlem had proclaimed the Grail to be the only Catholic youth movement for girls. Old institutions for the welfare of youth suddenly became obsolete, which provoked unsympathetic feelings towards the movement holding this monopoly.

Then there was a financial question. From the very beginning the Grail Youth Movement members and leaders supported their own Movement with generous weekly and monthly contributions. However, this was not sufficient for the total expenditures of the growing organisation. Bishop Aengenent asked from all parishes in the diocese a certain tax for the Grail Youth Movement. Resentment developed about this, especially as the structure of the movement was interparochial and the parish priests had no function in it.

It was a matter of much pain that these criticisms and irritations grew, especially among the clergy, and eventually reached Rome.

In May 1933, shortly after the Lydwina Play, a pilgrimage to Rome was organised among the Grail Youth Movement members to celebrate the Holy Year. The participants had been studying some Italian and had prepared a few short speaking choruses. When they arrived in Milan, the first stop in Italy, the group descended from the train and started a color-

ful demonstration, later repeated in Florence. This was probably too much for the Italian Church suffering as it was under the restrictions and problems caused by Mussolini's youth groups. Upon arrival in Rome the leaders did not experience any welcome from the side of the higher authorities and learned that especially the name 'Grail' was suspect. It roused associations with the opera of Wagner, which was greatly admired by Hitler, and so a cloud of suspicion hung over the whole.

AFFILIATION WITH CATHOLIC ACTION

Of course there were friends too who helped to straighten the matters out with the Vatican officials, and important contacts were made with leaders of the Catholic Action Movements in Italy. These contacts resulted finally in 1934 in the affiliation of the Dutch Grail Youth Movement with the Section des Jeunes de l'Union Internationale des Ligues Féminines Catholiques (Youth Section of the International Union of Catholic Women's Leagues), based in Rome. From then on the Movement had to be described as 'Vrouwelijke Jeugdbeweging voor Katholieke Actie, de Graal' (Feminine Youth Movement for Catholic Action, The Grail).

In the Church at that time the idea of an apostolic role of the laity in the particular form of Catholic Action was gaining ground more and more. The Grail Youth Movement, with its own method, structure and élan, took its place among the many movements for Catholic Action which were springing up on different levels and in different milieus. They all had one feature in common: the link with the Hierarchy through which they knew themselves to be inserted in the official apostolate of the Church.

The Women of Nazareth, Ladies of the Grail, took great care to maintain this link in a spirit of loyal obedience to the Bishops who had entrusted them with the guidance and activation of feminine youth.

AUDIENCE WITH POPE PIUS XI

In 1936 Bishop Aengenent, the great promoter of the Grail Youth Movement died. His successor was Mgr. J. Huibers, who knew the Movement first hand from his time as Dean of Hoorn in Northwest Holland.

A first concern of the new Bishop was the position of the Movement with the authorities in Rome. His predecessor, Bishop Aengenent, had already been in contact with the under-secretary of Pope Pius XI, Archbishop G. Pizzardo, and had received an invitation for an audience, together with a small group of responsible leaders of the newly-approved Feminine Youth Movement for Catholic Action, The Grail.

This audience took place in April 1936. In the Vatican, Bishop Huibers presented the Grail leaders to the Pope, who expressed his satisfaction with the work of the Grail Youth Movement under the leadership of the Women of Nazareth. Present at the audience were four Women of Nazareth, namely Ifis Seijbel, Mia van der Kallen, Alberta Lückler and Lydia Mulders, one Grail leader, Ans Gribling, who fulfilled a chief function in the Movement, and the ecclesiastical assistant, Prof. A. Vollaerts.

Vatican, 1936.

Swiss guard, Ans Gribling, Ifis Seijbel,
Prof. A. Vollaerts, Msgr. Testa, Bishop Huibers,
a Roman prelate and his assistant, Mia van der Kallen,
Lydia Mulders, Alberta Lucker



At a meeting at Pentecost 1936, Bishop Huibers conveyed this blessing of the Pope to four thousand Grail Youth Movement members who had gathered at the Cathedral in Haarlem. They had been delegated to represent the cities and areas where they were at work.

A LOOK AT AREAS AND NUMBERS

Repeatedly, as in the paragraph above, large numbers have been quoted and areas indicated. However, such terms only become significant if one is aware of the context, both populationwise and geographically.

The Grail Youth Movement worked in three of the eleven provinces of The Netherlands: Noord Holland, Zuid Holland and Zeeland.*

* For a short period the Movement was also at work in the province of Limburg, in the South of the Netherlands. One of its leaders, Geertruid Sweere, died in 1932, when she was twenty six years old. She was the first Woman of Nazareth to die and her grave was the only one at the Tiltenberg for many years.

These were the Western provinces, along the coast, where 40% of the total population lived, at that time about three million people. Of these 25.4% were Catholic, that is about 800,000. The Grail Youth Movement around 1935 counted among those 800,000 no less than 13,000 members and 2,000 Children of the Cross. The peak number of 21,122 members was reached in 1940.

GROWTH IN INTERNATIONAL CHARACTER

flow: in the Motherhouse
The Tiltenberg with its white and blue painted building standing in eleven acres of wooded ground was the place where the Women of Nazareth prayed and studied in complete privacy and seclusion and where they grew more and more together in the spirit. There the Society began to develop its international character, because some of the young women who had met the Grail in Germany and England came to join the Women of Nazareth and to receive part of their training. Firm bonds of friendship were formed among them through the experience of living and praying together in preparation for their task in the world.

Alberta Lückner from Bonn, Germany, came at this time, and Veronica Makens and Jean McKenzie from England. There were regular comings and goings from all corners. The Dutch Women of Nazareth who were working abroad spent periods of retreat and reflection in the Motherhouse, as the founder had stipulated. Mother Margaret guided it all and it was she who made the appointments to the different countries.

BEGINNINGS IN AUSTRALIA

As already mentioned a contingent of Grail Youth Movement members had taken part in the Eucharistic Congress in Dublin in 1932. There they had been noticed for their behaviour as women of prayer and outgoingness by Bishop J. Dwyer of Wagawaga, Australia. He had come in contact with a local leader from Amsterdam-East, Mies van As, who gave him some preliminary information. Somehow Bishop Dwyer remained in contact with this leader. However, when his hopes became too grand for her to cope with (he was learning Dutch in order to receive the Grail members whom he expected to come!) she referred him to the Women of Nazareth. The ensuing correspondence with Margaret van Gilse resulted in the arrival of Maria Malone from Australia at the Tiltenberg for training in 1935.

Then preparations began for a team to go overseas. Bishop Dwyer had arranged that the whole Australian Hierarchy would invite the Women of Nazareth - or Ladies of the Grail as they were to be called in Australia - to set up the Grail. For this first foundation outside Europe, in the Southern hemisphere, five Dutch Women of Nazareth were appointed. Lydwine van Kersbergen, with her experience from Holland and England, and Debora (Judith) Bouwman, who had made her mark as the creative leader of the Grail Department for the Rural Areas, were the

leaders. The other pioneers were Brigid Huizinga, Frances van der Schot and Do (Patricia) Willenborg. In August 1936 the five embarked on the long voyage to Sydney. After a year Maria Malone returned to Australia and joined the five.*

With this significant step the scope of the young movement for the conversion of the world was considerably widened indeed.



Australia, 1936.

Frances van der Schot, Brigid Huizinga, Lydwine van Kersbergen, Debora (Judith) Bouwman, and Do (Patricia) Willenborg

*The development of the Grail in Australia is described in a separate publication.

CHAPTER IV 1937-1945

“THERE IS A SEASON FOR EVERYTHING”

The Society of the Women of Nazareth, leadership corps of the Grail Youth Movement, now entered its seventeenth year of existence.

Through all the experiences and phases it had grown into a certain maturity, able to look critically at itself and to come to a stronger self-identification. As leaders and animators of thousands of young women in The Netherlands, Germany, England and Australia, the members formed a core group of about 120 women of different nationalities.

Their life, exciting in many respects, could not be called an easy one. Confronted daily with a stream of activities and responsibilities in their Grail work, they had to reach out at the same time to deeper levels of being - of 'being before God.' The contemplative element was an essential one. Father van Ginneken had said it so simply and charmingly: "Your example is Our Lady, the Mother of Jesus, who in Nazareth combined contemplation and action in a perfect way. Try to follow her, because that is why you carry the name Women of Nazareth."* The practice of such a life, however, was never so simple.

*See page 25

A TIME FOR GIVING BIRTH - A TIME FOR PLANTING

The practice of daily Mass and of an hour of private meditation was already firmly established, but a more extreme step seemed to be needed. In order to give more stress and shape to the spirit of prayer and of expiation for the sinfulness of humankind, and as a counter-balance to a threatening activism in their ranks, a new element was now introduced in the Tiltenberg: part of the building was set apart for a small group of 'Kernel Members' - Women of Nazareth who should lead a more intensified life of prayer and penance for the world. Some would do this for an extended period, maybe for years, some would join for a shorter time. Father van Ginneken was greatly desirous of seeing this succeed and was touchingly grateful when one of his best beloved 'children' (as he used to call his followers sometimes), Ifis Seijbel offered herself for this. Ifis had been president of the Grail Youth Movement in The Netherlands since 1934; in 1938 Rachel Donders was appointed to succeed her. Other Kernel Members, together with Ifis, were Ruth Bernard, Hermine Standenmeijer and Daniela Mensink.

One observation should be made here. The practice in years to come of setting aside places and people to be solely 'before God' is due to the initial inspiration of Father van Ginneken and to the initiative taken in 1938. This practice in the Grail has been stronger at some times than at others, and new forms have been sought out. The name 'Kernel Members' disappeared or took on another meaning; other terms like Prayer Members, Prayer Centre, Prayer Focus, the Ark, Patmos, Still Point came into use. They are all indications of the essential current of contemplation and expiation, supporting the Grail in its entirety, which found its first organised expression at this period.

NEW STATUTES FOR THE SOCIETY OF THE WOMEN OF NAZARETH

The Constitution which Father van Ginneken had drawn up in the twenties, based rather strongly on a convent pattern of life and using terms like 'pagan children in the big cities,' was recognized as outdated. Work started on drawing up new Statutes which would take into consideration the new possibilities that existed in The Netherlands and in other countries where the Women of Nazareth/Ladies of the Grail were working. Great care was taken to stress the lay character of the Society, but without subtracting one tittle or iota from the original spirit of deep religiosity.

In the new formulation of purpose, essence and spirit of the Society, it is not difficult to discern some elements which had proved to be most meaningful in the past as well as other features which were to be developed in the future as we know it now. Some quotations:

*(see page 24)

As a reminder of this, the Women of Nazareth in their Motherhouse, The Tiltenberg, wore a long white dress with a blue sash and white veil, called their "Maria kleeed" (Mary's dress). It was not worn outside the Tiltenberg and remained in use till 1942.

"About Purpose and Essence:

- . The Society of the Women of Nazareth is a religious union of Roman Catholic single lay women living in the world. As lay apostles they make themselves available, under the immediate guidance of the Bishops and with all the means approved by Holy Church, to help in the establishment and growth of the Kingdom of God over the whole world.
- . The works to which they dedicate themselves especially are: the education and organisation of the Catholic young girls and women, work in the Missions, and the work of conversion among non-Catholics, in particular through the establishment and maintenance of Retreat Houses.
- . In the exercise of their apostolate they are not permanently bound to definite forms and methods, but they adapt themselves as much as possible to the changing times and to the demands of the different countries and dioceses."

"About the Spirit of the Society:

The spirit of the Society of the Women of Nazareth is a spirit of joyful and radiant self-sacrifice, through which they strive after a true love for the Cross, the Cross on which Jesus offered Himself for the world. Thus the Women of Nazareth will offer themselves through an individual and collective love of the Cross to the Heavenly Father, placing all their talents and capacities at the service of the great ideal: the conversion of the world. The enthusiasm for this ideal must speak through all their resolutions and actions. Customs and exercises should never deteriorate into routine conventional habits, but the characteristics of the original spirit must always remain: enthusiasm and originality in finding ever new means, in adopting new possibilities, in initiating new plans and ventures, both in their own spiritual life and in their apostolate. There has to be a holy contest among the members to surpass each other in generosity."

In May 1940 Bishop Huibers approved these Statutes. They were printed and given to the Dutch members in the so called 'Blue Booklet.' However, due to the Second World War which had broken out in the meantime, and had cut off international connections, this Blue Booklet did not reach the Women of Nazareth overseas until years later. 'Overseas' meant as already mentioned: England and Australia, to which Scotland was added when a Grail Outpost was established there from London.* Later another part of the world came into focus: the United States of America.

* The development of The Grail in Scotland is described in a separate publication.

PREPARATIONS FOR THE U.S.A.

In 1938 Lydwine van Kersbergen, who had handed over the leadership of the group in Australia to Judith Bouwman, took part in a Pax Romana Congress in the U.S.A. with Alberta Lückner. Valuable contacts were made. A number of American friends were helping to prepare a Grail establishment in the New World. Among them was a young priest, Father James Coffey from Brooklyn, New York, who during his study time in Louvain, had met the Grail Youth Movement and Father van Ginneken.

In the summer of 1937 a young American woman, Mary Louise Tully from LaGrange, near Chicago, visited the Grail in Europe. In 1938 she returned to the Grail in England and later went to the Tiltenberg for further training.

In 1939, Cardinal Mundelein of Chicago invited the Ladies of the Grail to his diocese, to work for the lay apostolate.

A TIME FOR UPROOTING - A TIME FOR TEARS

How long could all this continue, this movement over the world, this expansion with the enthusiasm proper to youth, and the dynamism proper especially to this group?

It seemed that quite another sort of time was now at hand. The first loss was the death of Mia van der Kallen on April 30, 1939. With her talented, sympathetic personality, ever since she joined the Women of Nazareth, Mia had been one of the most creative and influential leaders, beloved in The Netherlands and in Germany. She was sorely missed by all. In a moving celebration she was buried next to Geertruid Sweere in the little cemetery at the Tiltenberg.

DISSOLUTION OF THE GRAIL MOVEMENT IN GERMANY

Then came the blow expected for some time: the closing down of the Grail centres in Berlin by the Nazis who had been growing in influence since 1933, and the expulsion of the Dutch Women of Nazareth at work there. In promoting their 'Hitler Jugend,' the Nazis could not tolerate any other youth movement, and certainly not one of such Christian character. Dé Groothuizen had been obliged by the Nazi authorities to leave the country in 1937. In 1939, Joan Overboss, for several years the leader of the Grail Youth Movement in Berlin, had to return to The Netherlands; she saved many of the belongings of the Grail.

Alberta Lückner went to Nymegen to do academic work under Father van Ginneken. Other German Grail leaders and Women of Nazareth went to the Tiltenberg for a short while, but ultimately returned to their own country to be with their families in this time of stress and sorrow.

A PAINFUL FAREWELL

In the meantime there was still the invitation from the United States. It was obvious that Lydwine was the person to start the Grail there. She had all the experience of pioneering: in The Netherlands in 1928 with Mia van der Kallen, in England in 1933 with Yvonne Bosch van Drakestein, in Australia in 1936 with Judith Bouwman, and next it would

be in the United States, with Joan Overboss as her companion.

There was a dramatic moment in April 1940 at the Central Station of The Hague, when a deputation of the Dutch Grail gathered to say farewell to the two pioneers. More dramatic than they realized. A short while before the boat-train left (no transatlantic airlines existed yet), a messenger put a telegram in the hands of Mother Margaret. She read it, turned away for a few moments, and then came back to embrace the two warmly and, together with all the others present, waved them off. When the train was out of sight she faced those around her: the telegram was from Australia and contained the tidings that Judith Bouwman, the leader in Australia, had died in a motor accident on March, 1940.

THE WAR REACHES THE NETHERLANDS

It was just as well that Father van Ginneken during his course on the Apostolate of Women in 1932 had warned: "The conversion of the world will not take place by a few hurrahs and a successful day! You will have to toil and struggle and keep at it in pain and suffering, too. There will be sickness and death, loneliness, failure and misunderstandings, and you may burn up like a candle..."

But he had also said: "God has permitted suffering in the world to make us great. The cross is the principle of growth. Therefore, try to love the cross. If you carry the cross gladly, the cross will carry you and bring you to deeper happiness and fulfillment."

His lessons were not without fruit. In Australia the young members of those first three years heroically pulled together under the leadership of Frances van der Schot who took over after Judith's death. In England the Grail entered the war period with exemplary readiness to serve. In the U.S.A. Lydwine and Joan pioneered with inventiveness and vision, and in The Netherlands the leaders and members of the youth movement tried to draw together in a deeper faithfulness to the spirit than ever before.

On May 10, 1940, Hitler's troops crossed the border and engaged in a five day battle with the Dutch army; Rotterdam, open city, was bombarded. Then the Queen and government went into exile, and The Netherlands with all its institutions were occupied by the German Nazis. From then on all contact between the Women of Nazareth in The Netherlands and the foundations in other countries was broken.

Surprisingly the Grail Youth Movement continued in The Netherlands for almost two years. However, its activities were much curtailed by regulations resulting from the black-out and curfew all over the country, and because of the material situation which became worse every day.

The members tried to use the time well. A campaign was launched to help the families which had been bombed out in Rotterdam and the families of Dutch army and navy men who had suffered in the war, short though it had been. Grail meetings were held as much as possible on weekends and afternoons. The training of leaders continued, and a new training programme was even inaugurated - a three months residential course in the Central Grail House in Scheveningen for young women who had left secondary school and were searching for a meaningful task in society. Summer camps were organised in 1941 for leaders, members and young women who were aware of

of the need for a concerted effort as Christians. Trees van Voorst tot Voorst was one among them.

It was a time also of deepened prayer. The practice of Bible study, hardly known among Catholics for centuries, became more common. Evenings of meditation in the darkened churches attracted many, and the Grail had some material for meditation printed to nourish this trend. A Prayer Book for Girls, composed by the Women of Nazareth, was published. However, the days of the movement were numbered.

DISSOLUTION OF GRAIL YOUTH MOVEMENT AND SOCIETY OF WOMEN OF NAZARETH IN THE NETHERLANDS

In the course of the year 1942 the Grail centres in the cities in Holland were confiscated one by one by the German Nazis, and the leaders living there had to leave, allowed to take only a few personal belongings with them. For some time the hope remained that the Tiltenberg would escape this lot, because of its less active and more 'religious' character. However, on October 4, 1942, the German Nazi "Sicherheits Polizei" (Security Police) appeared at its doors. They confiscated the place with everything in it, declared the Society of the Women of Nazareth dissolved and threatened to send the members to concentration camps if they were ever found together operating underground.

WHAT WOULD REMAIN?

What was going to happen now to that small band of women spread over three continents, and to the youth movements they had engendered? They had been so strongly united and guided, and now the main safeguard of their unity, the central authority of the international leader, could not be effective any more.

Already in the early days Father van Ginneken had warned: "In the long run, everything will depend on your capacity to remain united." It was for this reason that a ready and total obedience was asked of all, as one of the most important elements of the spirit. The deep underlying motivation for this obedience could not be anything else of course than the all-penetrating love for Jesus Christ, Who had willed to become obedient even until death, death on a cross. That was deeply ingrained in the spirituality from the earliest days. The practical side had been developed in daily life, especially in the adventurous days of the building of the Grail Youth Movement: in a quick response to what was asked, an availability for every task, readiness to go wherever one was sent, openness to listen and to speak - both on the part of the authority and of the membership - a willingness to shoulder responsibility with one's whole heart, and also to take initiative freely when expected to do so.

This had not been very difficult in those years. On the contrary, it was a group of young people and everybody knew she still had to learn and to grow; nobody could claim much experience. There was real trust in the leaders, and very specially in the wise guidance of Margaret van Gilse.

Now, with the isolation of The Netherlands where the International Leader resided, the ventures in England, Scotland, Australia and the

U.S.A. had to develop on their own. The National Leaders in those countries could not refer to the International Leader or ask for her guidance any more.

What made it even more difficult was the fact that the social and cultural circumstances to which they had to respond were quite different in each of these countries, as were the expectations of the Hierarchy, and the means at the disposal of the leaders.

In The Netherlands there was still another situation. The members there scattered in all directions, were obliged to use their own ingenuity to survive somehow during those years of hardship and hunger.

Indeed:

There is a season for everything...

A time for giving birth,
a time for dying;
a time for planting
a time for uprooting what has been planted.
a time for laughter,
a time for tears.....

(Ecclesiastes 3)

What would be the outcome of this season, the season of World War II ?

CHAPTER V 1945-1949

GROWING APART — GROWING TOGETHER

REUNION

When in May 1945 the war on the Western front came to an end and international communication began to be restored, the joy of finding each other again was immense.

Yvonne Bosch van Drakestein and Thecla Schiphorst were the first to appear in person in The Netherlands, crossing the North Sea from England, and finding Margaret van Gilse in a small furnished apartment in The Hague. The Tiltenberg had been badly damaged and was still uninhabitable.

most soberly furnished!

Telegrams and letters were exchanged among all parts of the world in those first weeks and months; parcels with food and clothing began to arrive in the plundered country; information of all sorts came in and was distributed; and in general the mood was one of great relief that the group had survived.

When the first emotions had somewhat abated and the most pressing stories and reports told or written, and when freedom and food had become normal again, Margaret van Gilse and the leaders began to take stock.

It became clear that, compared to the situation before the war, great changes had come about, both in the apostolate and in the style of life. In the separate countries there were several new orientations differing widely from each other. How far had there been a growing apart?

CHANGES IN APOSTOLIC ENGAGEMENT

Whereas before 1940 the stress had been on the Grail as a youth movement, by 1945 a considerable change had come about. In Germany and The Netherlands the youth movements had disappeared altogether and there was no inclination to revive them. In Australia there had been a process of winding down its mass aspects. In general the idea of mass Catholic Action organisations was no longer alive in the countries. The focus at this time had shifted to another form of education: residential training of young women in radical Christian living. Grailville in the U.S.A. practised this in an extreme way. In Australia the residential courses, inaugurated by Judith Bouwman before her death, continued to flourish, and were noted for their rich creativity. In The Netherlands among the last successful programmes before the dissolution were the three months residential courses conducted in the Grail Centre in Scheveningen.

Another development was that several Women of Nazareth/Ladies of the Grail, either alone or in small teams together with members of the youth movement, had found meaningful work in projects and institutions of a social or cultural character such as, The Club in Edinburgh, Scotland, and The Arrows Club in Sydney, Australia. Other projects were sponsored by secular or Church organisations. The Catholic Library in Sydney, the Centres for the Apostolate of the Sea in Amsterdam and Rotterdam, and the Catholic Hospital St. Antoniusshove near The Hague were examples of this form of engagement.

But the biggest shift had taken place particularly in The Netherlands and to some extent in Germany and Australia, when it became necessary for a number of members to start participating in the general process of work in society. Instead of community life in a Grail centre with all engaged in the same planning and action, life for such members meant professional involvement in a school, office or hospital, occupying an apartment by oneself like thousands of other women, or in some cases living with relatives. Instead of the regular daily rhythm with its pleasant moments of communal meals, prayer and worship, there was the personal search for a rhythm of work, prayer and openness to others, in order to be fruitful in one's particular circumstances. For them the spirit of the cross had to become fruitful in a position in which the majority of women found themselves.*

* These thoughts are taken from a letter from one of the leaders at that time.

1945 MEETING IN ENGLAND

In view of all this it became clear that a meeting between the leaders and Father van Ginneken was urgently needed in order to come to a profound exchange and evaluation and to draw up plans for the future.

This meeting took place in August, 1945 at the National Centre of the Ladies of the Grail in Eastcote, near London. Father van Ginneken, extremely happy that his foundation had somehow survived, was the inspiring figure. Margaret van Gilse was there as the International Leader of the Ladies of the Grail, Ifis Seijbel as representative of The Netherlands, Josepha Gall for Scotland, Alberta Lückner for Germany, Frances van der Schot for Australia, Lydwine van Kersbergen for the U.S.A. and Yvonne Bosch van Drakestein for England.



England, 1945.
Father van Ginneken

TWO TENDENCIES

Grateful as everyone was for this gathering, there was also a certain uneasiness, for it soon appeared that the differences in apostolic engagement and life were deeper than at first thought.

It was possible to distinguish two tendencies especially in regard to the role of the Women of Nazareth and the thrust towards the future.

The one laid stress on an enduring institutional element, the Society of the Ladies of the Grail, strongly organised, with the strength and the spirit to carry out initiatives of an apostolic character under a central leadership. The formation of young women for fervent Christian living was the centre of interest, but the leadership role of the Ladies of the Grail and their continuation as a distinct group of lay apostles had to be explicit and continually nourished. This tendency was adhered to especially by the group in England and Scotland, with The Netherlands and Germany on the verge of new experiments.

In the U.S.A. a quite different orientation could be discerned. There the idea was to promote a more general current for the apostolate of the laity, without name or structure and with a minimum of organised activities. This was based on the concept of the Sacrament of Baptism as the foundation and seed of all apostolic endeavours of all Christians; while in the first orientation the members found their strength in their awareness of a special call, their vocation to work in unity for Christ's Kingdom on earth, recognizing this call in each other.



Grailville.

Mary Alice Duddy, Janet Kalven, Catherine Leahy, Josephine Drabek

The heart of this spiritual current in the U.S.A. was Grailville where hundreds of young women came for courses and training in an integrated Christian life based on life with the Church. From among these women Lydwine van Kersbergen and Joan Overboss, together with Mary Louise Tully, had gathered a small group of volunteers who lived at Grailville in total availability for the apostolate. The name Grail appeared only in the term 'Grailville' and the girls were scarcely aware of the existence of the Grail as a youth movement in other parts of the world. In Australia there was a tendency to go in the same direction, although the past with all its traditions of Ladies of the Grail, Grail Centres, youth groups, youth movement, the Grail quest, etc. was still well known.

On studying these developments in their meeting in England, the leaders found that both approaches had their value and strength, and both had their dangers. To put it briefly: in the first approach there was the danger of institutionalisation, self-importance, and in the end, the stifling of life; in the second there was the possibility of a gradual disappearance into vagueness and anonymity.

Still, the second tendency, being new and all-embracing, had something very attractive. Wisely it was decided at this juncture not to force anything, not to condemn the one or opt for the other, but to leave the possibilities open. Margaret van Gilse would go to the U.S.A. and spend a considerable time at Grailville to see the situation for herself. Her Judgement would be decisive in the end.

DEATH OF FATHER VAN GINNEKEN

Before Margaret van Gilse had finished her preparations for the voyage the group suffered a great loss: Father van Ginneken died in Nymegen, on 21 October 1945, after a short illness. He was 68 years old. His

funeral, and burial in the Jesuit cemetery at Grave, was an occasion for his many friends, admirers and followers to express their sorrow, but at the same time to show their gratitude for everything he had meant to them. The Grail people were particularly grateful that he had seen the revival of his foundation, and that he had been able to give a last word of inspiration and encouragement.

SHOULDERING THE WORK AGAIN

Now it was a matter of continuing in spite of a series of difficulties. In Germany Alberta Lückner started again courageously, living with Hanna Arens and Agnes Feldhege in her parental home in Bonn. It was to take years, however, before a movement could grow up again on the physical and spiritual ruins of the war.

In The Netherlands the Women of Nazareth did not again take up their pre-war field of work - The Grail Youth Movement. Bishop Huibers appointed a priest to organise youth work and youth care in the diocese. A few of the younger Women of Nazareth became involved in the Girl Guide Movement, but a youth movement was not their common task any more. Not that there was no work to be done; many were the social needs crying out, and in response the Women of Nazareth became involved in Family Service, in Centres where mothers could come to recuperate, in a centre for the re-education of young working girls in psychological difficulties, in centres for Dutch families repatriated from Indonesia where they had suffered greatly in camps under Japanese occupation.

At the same time The Tiltenberg, half ruined during the Nazi occupation, had to be rebuilt; the formation of the younger ones had to be continued; those who were sick and suffering in the aftermath of the war had to be helped until their health was restored. The burden of all this was quite heavy. Each one became absorbed in the needs of the moment, giving herself there wholeheartedly - but it was difficult to weave a pattern of unity among these divergent activities.*

In Australia a similar process took place: absorption in the needs of the present moment and a search for relevant fields of action. Still, the leaders there had the far-sightedness to send one of their younger members to the Tiltenberg and one to Grailville in the U.S.A., for the sake of international contact—a hopeful sign indeed of the wish to grow together.

THE EXEMPLARY SPIRIT AT GRAILVILLE

Margaret van Gilse began to write from Grailville about her impressions and experiences. She found the spirit there to be of a radicalism and generosity she had seldom seen before. Without any structural safeguarding or 'security,' there was a self-giving, an availability and a

*The development of the Grail in The Netherlands after the period of World War II is described in a separate volume.

spirit of prayer and sacrifice exemplary for all. She was not sure how long Grailville would be able to maintain this high level, but still she did not think it was the moment to intervene or force a change. Grailville could continue under Lydwine's leadership without any structural ties with the Women of Nazareth or Ladies of the Grail in other countries. Only Lydwine, Joan Overboss and Mary Louise Tully, as well as two recently arrived Dutch members, Lydia Mulders and Ans Coeberg van de Braak, were and remained members of the Women of Nazareth/Ladies of the Grail, but without this being known at large.

EXPANSION TO INDONESIA, HONG KONG, BRASIL

At the same time Margaret van Gilse announced a request from Bishop H. Valtorta of Hong Kong for help in the promotion of the lay apostolate. It was decided that Mary Louise Tully would go; she arrived in Hong Kong in January 1947.

These communications were a great relief. The Ladies of the Grail and the Women of Nazareth in different countries and in different kinds of activities had been growing apart, but still the group was growing, was 'en route,' the spirit was alive, the leadership was firm, and there was confidence that if only a fervent spirit could be maintained, all would be well in the end. There was still hope for a world-wide movement of women for the sake of Christ's Kingdom - much hope even. Requests for help in the lay apostolate in 'mission countries,' invitations from bishops and priests, kept coming in. In 1948 Ifis Seijbel went with a team to Brasil, first to Belém in the State of Para, later to Belo Horizonte in Minas Gerais, to start work there. In the same year Coleta van der Ploeg left for Surinam. Elisabeth Allard had already arrived in Indonesia in 1946, going from England through Australia. She worked in Jakarta - then still called Batavia - and in the beginning of 1949 Miriam Meertens went from The Netherlands to join her there.*

In The Netherlands the idea was conceived to inaugurate a training for professional young women - medical doctors, nurses, teachers - who would go abroad for a few years, working in teams at the service of the Church in the missions. This was an old idea of Father van Ginneken, now revived in a more modern way, and it was taken up with enthusiasm. The first course for about twenty young women took place at the Tiltenberg. Soon a Grail Missionary Training Centre was established at Ubbergen near Nymegen, and the first team was sent out in 1948 to Java and Borneo.

AUTONOMY FOR THE ENGLISH GRAIL

In England, as in the other countries where the Grail Youth Movement had started under the leadership of the Women of Nazareth in the thirties, relations with the Hierarchy were strong and considered essential. Cardinal Griffin of the Diocese of Westminster, had taken a great interest

* The history of the Grail in Brasil, Surinam and Indonesia is described in a separate publication.

in its growth and development, and was informed about the international differences and difficulties. Somehow he seemed wary about the directions taken in other countries, notably in the U.S.A. and about the authority of Margaret van Gilse.

In the year 1946 Margaret van Gilse's term of office had expired, but at that time of much confusion in the aftermath of the war, Bishop Huibers had consented to the request made by the Dutch Women of Nazareth that she continue. Again in 1948, when an effort was made to hold an election for a new International Leader - Margaret herself was convinced that she should withdraw - Bishop Huibers intervened and decided that an election should take place a year later in 1949.

Before that time, however, the Auxiliary Bishop of Westminster, Bishop Myers, came to The Netherlands to speak with Bishop Huibers, and to inform him of the wish of Cardinal Griffin that the Grail in England should become independent from 'Holland' or from any other international authority and should become autonomous, under his jurisdiction and the leadership of Yvonne Bosch van Drakestein. In his turn Bishop Huibers informed Margaret van Gilse of this decision.

It was a very painful blow. How the contribution of England in the international apostolate of the Grail would be missed! And the warm relationship with the English members! And...was the Grail to fall apart after all? Did the other countries also want to go their own way? Was the strong unity among the Women of Nazareth broken?

Fortunately this was not the case. The Dutch Women of Nazareth who were at work in England at the time of the separation came back to The Netherlands as they wanted to remain under the international authority. Two of the English Ladies of the Grail who were not in London at the time did not return there,* and later two of the younger English women came to the Tiltenberg as candidates for the international group.** In Scotland Archbishop MacDonald of Edinburgh expressed his wish that the Grail in Scotland remain with The Netherlands. None of the other countries thought of 'autonomy.'

SOUTH AFRICA JOINS

For some time already a number of young professional women in South Africa had been in contact with the Grail in England, forming a kind of outpost and using for their inspiration the English Grail publications. Archbishop J. Whelan from Johannesburg visited the Tiltenberg at the beginning of 1949 and discussed with Margaret van Gilse his wish to connect the group with the international centre in The Netherlands, and to welcome into his diocese a team of Women of Nazareth to strengthen the existing lay apostolate there.

For the time being a response to this invitation had to wait, but contact with the group in Johannesburg was established. * **

 * Jean McKenzie + and Rita Westlake
 ** Janet Smith and Dorothy Smith

*** The development of the Grail in South Africa is described in a separate publication.

ELECTION OF INTERNATIONAL LEADER

Preparations for the election of a new International Leader were then made, and on May 6, 1949, a fervent Veni Sancte Spiritus resounded in the chapel at the Tiltenberg at the opening of the voting session presided over by Bishop Huibers. The votes from the countries outside Europe had already come in by mail, in sealed envelopes: from Australia, Brasil, Hong Kong, Surinam, the United States. Present were voting representatives of Scotland, The Netherlands and Germany.

In this election Rachel Donders - who for a year had been living as a 'Kernel Member' in 'De Ark' - was chosen as successor to Margaret van Gilse and became the second International Leader of what was still called the Society of the Women of Nazareth, Die Frauen von Nazareth, the Ladies of the Grail.

CHAPTER VI 1949-1961

TRANSITIONS AND EXPANSION

THE TIME

Of the young people of the 1950s in the Western world it has been said later that they were 'the silent generation.' Maybe they were holding their breath before the tremendous changes which were to come upon them.

The great tensions of this period, affecting the life of many people, were no doubt caused by a new world-awareness. This held for every part of the world population. The rich became aware of the poor and vice-versa; the underdeveloped saw their state in comparison with the developed and reciprocally; the colonized countries and their colonizers, the oppressed and their oppressors, the powerful and the weak, they were all slowly but truthfully becoming aware of their condition in relation to each other. The United Nations Organisation - at first rather an idealistic and hesitant attempt after the earlier failure of the League of Nations - began to play a role in meeting the discrepancies, especially through its specialised agencies, UNESCO, FAO, WHO, UNICEF.

Political tensions also grew between East and West, a hovering between cold war and co-existence, and between the ideological parties behind them.

A unique event at the beginning of this period was the coming home of the Jewish people which for more than a thousand years had wandered in the diaspora, suffered near-annihilation, but had kept their hope in a divine promise, thus witnessing to the monotheistic faith - their gift to mankind.

Then came at the end of the decade another unique event and achievement, when a little dog returned alive and cheerful from a journey into outer space. From then on the tensions between the great powers changed into fierce competition, and research for a peaceful use of atomic energy turned into a race for the conquest of the planetary universe.

The younger generation was silent? Perhaps they were awed by the new horizons opening up for mankind through visions like those of Father P. Teilhard de Chardin, for whom everything was converging towards 'Point Omega.' Perhaps they were dejected by the existentialist view of the absurdity, the nothingness, the meaninglessness of life, or confused by the de-mythologizing trends in religion, which till then had been a static base. And even if they themselves were not confused, but rather open for a new vision, then often their parents and teachers felt threatened and were holding on for dear life to old forms and tenets.

For many people the opening up of the world and its contradictions - remember, this was also the time when television began to bring the world into the living room - could be seen as a challenge; for others it often meant the loss of a central focus, the slow fading of once-energizing beliefs.

TRANSITIONS IN THE SOCIETY OF THE LADIES OF THE GRAIL

Professor van Ginneken had often spoken of the shrinking boundaries of the globe and had urged his followers to think and plan in terms of a world apostolate. At the same time he had sown in them a sensitivity to the Spirit Who unifies, Who moves towards a centre and integrates all action into one plan.

Thus it was a challenging task in the period which started in 1949 to follow these two lines and combine them:

- launching out over the world, engaging in diverse initiatives according to the needs and hopes of each part
- at the same time sustaining a strong centripetal force, a centre of unity, in spirit as well as in organisation, so that the communal character would be guaranteed.

The first part of the globe to which attention had to be paid in this regard was the United States of America, with Grailville as the focus. Grailville, a training centre for lay leadership based on a farm where everyone shared in the work, was blossoming with hundreds of young women participating in courses and in the "Year School." It had a staff of around twenty full-time volunteers, called "free workers" or "Grail workers." and in its vicinity young married couples worked together to build up a community with a strong Christian life, centred in liturgical worship, prayer and work as love-made-visible.

In other parts of the U.S.A. women who had followed a formation period at Grailville were at work individually in apostolic endeavours related to the Church. A number of them had married and aimed, together with their husbands, at making their homes into centres of Christian life.

The loyalty of these women was to Grailville and to the leaders who had guided them there; in their own surroundings they stood for the religious and cultural values they had absorbed and which they treasured - but there was as yet no organised action on a state or national level, and no adherence to an international group. The focus was on the universal apostolate and the task of every Christian, married or single, to work in the service of the Church. With its constant efforts to form a way of life in which religious and secular values were integrated, Grailville was unique and brought a special contribution to the American scene.

But how did it fit, structurally, into the picture of the organised world apostolate of women, as Father van Ginneken had imagined it?

Convinced that steps had to be taken to work this out, Lydwine van Kersbergen invited the new International Leader of the Women of Nazareth to come over, like Margaret van Gilse before her had done, and to discuss possibilities. In September 1951 Rachel Donders crossed the Atlantic for a stay of five months at Grailville. Introduced as President of the Grail in The Netherlands she met with a warm welcome, openness and a sincere willingness to collaborate. Soon an understanding of the spiritual dimension grew, and plans for an insertion in the international structure were contemplated. But how?

A NEW TERMINOLOGY

A way was found in the heritage of Father Van Ginneken.

"Your method" he had explained in his course for the Grail Youth Movement leaders in 1932, "must be one of forming multiple kernels, nuclei. In each of your youth groups there must be two or three especially fervent girls who can influence the others - and such nuclei must be formed on all levels of the movement. And finally the Women of Nazareth have to be the nucleus of the whole. Indeed, that is what I have wanted to found, after all: a fiery nucleus of women who dedicate themselves totally to Jesus Christ and who create a movement for the conversion of the world."* With this the formula was given.

On October 9th, 1951, twelve young American women pronounced an act of total dedication to Jesus Christ, in a Eucharistic Liturgy at Grailville led by Rev. Nicholas Maestrini, P.I.M.E., an understanding friend. They confirmed by oath their resolve to serve in the apostolate of the dedicated Nucleus of the Grail and thus they were accepted as members of the Grail Nucleus by the International President.**

* in "Course on the Apostolate of Women" conference No.23

** the twelve were: Anna Agre, Mary Imelda Buckley, Josephine Drabek, Mary Alice Duddy, Judith Hines, Janet Kalven, Mary Anne Kimbell, Catherine Leahy, Debora Schak, Barbara Ellen Wald+, Francine Wickes and Mariette Wickes

On January 13th, 1952, shortly before Rachel Donders travelled back to The Netherlands, eight more young women made their dedication as Grail Nucleus members,* and in the years to come many more would follow.

The leaders in the other countries were informed of this important step and from all sides congratulations poured in. There was true rejoicing about this strengthening of the unity and identity of the Nucleus, and about the growth in potentiality for the apostolate. The change in terminology, too, was well received. Bishop Huibers in Haarlem, The Netherlands - the ecclesiastical authority for the whole - also proved understanding. After her return from the U.S.A. Rachel Donders went to him to explain, with some trepidation, the change in name from 'Vrouwen van Nazareth' to 'Nucleus of the Grail,' from 'promise of the evangelical counsels' to 'total dedication to Christ,' and also from 'national and international leaders' to 'national and international presidents,' and that The Tiltenberg would not be called the Motherhouse any more but 'The International Grail Centre.' "I am not surprised," Bishop Huibers said, "it expresses better what you are and want to be."

The task now lying ahead was to promote a Movement, through the action and spirit of Nucleus members. But this was not to be achieved without encountering difficulties, from inside and outside.

DIFFICULTIES FROM INSIDE

Within the Nucleus there was first of all the factor that the influx of new members - not only in the U.S.A. but also elsewhere, most notably in The Netherlands - demanded a programme of formation more goal-oriented and explicit than ever before. As yet there existed no method for this. The new perspective asked for a creative approach in the articulation of a spirituality, authentically Christian, challenging for women, and open to the world of the time. Inspiration and nourishment was found in the works of the new theologians of this era, of biblical scholars and modern Christian writers. However, to translate it all into everyday language and then to apply it to everyday practice, while remaining faithful to the original intuitions of the founder, was not an easy task.

Secondly, not all Nucleus members understood the true nature of a movement of adult women. For those who had the experience of the Grail Youth Movement period it was easier to grasp, although there also some notions had to be modified. Leadership of youth groups had to be changed into collaboration among adult women; the former simple, not to say simplistic, spiritual formation had to be widened into a consciously integrated approach; zeal directed to a particular social class or milieu had to develop a wider scope, reaching out to women of all walks of life. Quite a number of members had joined the Nucleus in a period when the stress had been on activities in social, charitable and

* the eight were: Dolores Brien, Marie Therese McDermit, Thea von Eroes, Veronica Forbes, Elaine Jones, Rosaline Kew, Brigid Niland+, and Martha Orso+.

educational fields, no doubt very valuable and important, but tending to institutionalism. In the Grail context they saw their individual action more as a help in creating a 'spiritual current' - an idea also found in Father van Ginneken's approach - influencing Church and world, but without any physiognomy or structure, in other words: not as an organised Movement.

A third difficulty within the Nucleus at this time was the current view of the role of women. That women had a role to play, that they had to give their talents and use their influence, nobody doubted. "But could we not work simply AS women?" they asked. "We ARE women anyhow, aren't we? So why bother about an explicit philosophy or even theology of our task and role? Of course in a number of countries the emancipation of women has not been achieved, and some parts of the Grail should work for that, but elsewhere...? Could not this subject be left alone?" Later years would show that emancipation still had to turn into liberation and would bear out those leaders of this period who had kept working to develop an underlying vision of woman's place in the world.

DIFFICULTIES FROM OUTSIDE

These inside problems were aggravated by circumstances outside. In society as well as in Church circles women were mostly considered as 'helpers,' not to say servants, very worthwhile and even indispensable, but in general supposed to carry out tasks created and handed out by men. The idea that women might initiate new ventures under their own responsibility, the notion of women guiding women on all levels, was still strongly at odds with the prevailing mentality.

Moreover, the Church authorities had become aware of the existence of a growing number of women's groups, usually under the direction of a priest, the members of which led a life of service to the Church without becoming religious in the canonical sense.

In Rome in 1947, a new category had been established in Canon Law making such groups a part of the Congregation for Religious Life, under the title of "Secular Institutes." For a long time to come, but especially in the fifties, there was strong pressure on the Nucleus from the side of the Church to become such a Secular Institute submitting to the rules which Rome had laid down.

The responsible leaders, when confronted with this issue, would try to explain their viewpoint:

- . To register in Rome under the Congregation of the Religious would endanger the basic notion of the lay character of the Nucleus, so insistently stressed by the founder.
- . To be termed an institute just when the possibilities of launching a movement had become most urgent, would tend to separate the group of Nucleus members from women of other vocations; development of an institutional character would stifle the growth towards a genuine women's movement with lateral relationships between all.

Most of the Secular Institutes then recognized were under the direction of a priest, and this feature too was contrary to what from the early days onwards had been a firmly established principle: one direct link with the Hierarchy in the person of the Bishop of Haarlem, The Netherlands, together with the full responsibility of the women themselves for the guidance and development of their own communal life and work.

Fortunately many of the Church leaders understood these viewpoints, or were patient enough to allow the Grail to take charge of its own development.

However, as a result of the need to keep a certain distance from Rome in this respect, the Grail in this period was not recognized as an international movement for the lay apostolate like other international organisations, which together formed the I.C.O. (International Catholic Organisations). Through personal contact, however, there grew a sincere mutual appreciation and much collaboration in the field of international apostolate with most of the leaders of these organisations.

RELATIONS WITH THE INSTITUTIONAL CHURCH

Through early experience in The Netherlands and elsewhere, the Grail in the '50s had inherited a concept of episcopal authority and a respect for the spiritual meaning of the office. The slogan 'Nil sine Episcopo' - 'Nothing without the Bishop' - now reinforced this attitude. From their side, bishops became more and more aware of the possibilities of the lay apostolate and of its true nature. Thus, many requests for information and invitations came in at the office of the International President. Rachel Donders regularly sought contact with the hierarchy of the Church in the places she visited, as did the National Presidents and other leaders in their own areas.



International President.
Rachel Donders

The International Grail Nucleus - successor to the Society of the Women of Nazareth - as it developed over the years remained under the jurisdiction of the Bishop of Haarlem who mostly left it to its own devices and initiatives. Bishop Huibers gladly received reports and gave advice when asked; he graciously gave permission for a chapel in the Tiltenberg grounds and in June 1953 came to consecrate it, conducting the splendid ceremony given in the Liturgical Codex of the Church. He presided over the meetings of all National Presidents and delegates for the election of an International President, thus confirming the insertion of the Nucleus in the apostolate of the Church.

Such a meeting took place on May 6th, 1955 when Rachel Donders was re-elected as International President for six years.

Elsewhere the relations with the hierarchy were in general cordial and supportive. For new initiatives and developments in the respective countries direct contact with the local bishop(s) was taken up. Rarely did Grail enterprises or groups come under the direction of local priests. However, a large number of priests, especially younger ones, and seminarians, used to come to Grail centres for exchange of ideas and for mutual enriching of insights in the new trends in theology and apostolate. Many a young girl found her way to the Grail on the instigation of her parish priest or of a student pastor who had met the Grail.

FURTHER EXPANSION

Before 1949 the Grail Nucleus had started work in nine countries: The Netherlands, Germany, Australia, Scotland, Indonesia, Hong Kong, Brasil and Surinam.

Between 1949 and 1961 twelve more countries were added to the list, as follows:*

- 1951: Republic of South Africa,
at the invitation of Bishop J. Whelan, O.M.I., of Johannesburg;
to train women leaders for the lay apostolate.
First team: Margaret van Gilse (Belgian) and Frances van der Schot
(Dutch).
- 1953: Basutoland (later Lesotho),
at the invitation of Rev. R. Guilbeault, O.M.I., of Pius XII
University in Roma; to work with women students
Mary Imelda Buckley and Mary Emma Kuhn (U.S.A.)
- Uganda,
at the invitation of Archbishop J. Cabana, W.F., to take charge
of a mission hospital at Rubaga.
Marie Therese McDermid, Lorraine Machan (U.S.A.)
Magdalene Oberhoffer (German)

* the development of the Grail in these countries is described in a separate volume.

Belgian Congo (later Zaire),
at the request of Bishop M. Cleire, W.F., of Kasongo, to staff
a semi-governmental hospital in Kasongo.
Hilda Canters and Joke van Neerven (both Dutch).

1955: Egypt,
at the request of Rev. H. Ayrout, S.J., in Cairo, to work for
his Association of Christian Schools in Upper Egypt.
Gail Malley (U.S.A.) and Roseline de Villaines (French).

1956: Urundi (later Burundi),
at the invitation of Bishop G. Grauls, W.F., of Kitega to work
with women, training leaders for the lay apostolate.
Hilda Canters and Hanny Doesburg (both Dutch).

1957: Portugal,
on the initiative of Maria de Lourdes Pintasilgo and Teresa
Santa Clara Gomes (both Portuguese), leaders of Catholic Action
for Students.

1958: Ruanda,
at the invitation of Bishop J. Perraudin, W.F., of Kabgayi,
to start a rehabilitation centre for handicapped youths.
Mariette Wickes and Viola LaFosse (U.S.A.)

Singapore,
at the invitation of Bishop C. Olcomendy, M.E.P., of Singapore,
to work for the lay apostolate among the Chinese population.
Clara Sun, Mary Ruth Wong and Noella Liu (all three Chinese).

Tanganyika (later Tanzania),
at the invitation of Bishop F. Lanctôt, W.F., of Bukoba, to
work for the education of women in his diocese.
Coleta van der Ploeg+ (Dutch).

Canada,
begun as an outpost of the Grail in the U.S.A., later run by
local Grail participants in Toronto.

1959/60 Ghana,
at the invitation of Bishop G. Champagne, W.F., of Tamale and
Bishop A. Konings, S.M.A., of Keta, for teaching and social and
medical work. Catherine Bagley (Australian) and Margaret
Marquart (German).

In this period Grail presence was to be found also in

Fiji, Oceania, in the persons of Mary Coleman, Pat Kent and Phillipa
Green, teaching in a Teachers Training College (all
three Australians).

Papua Niugini, through Sheila Hawthorn and Pat Noonan (both Australians.)

Kenya, Kobujoi, through Phini van Rijdt (Dutch) and Resi Sax (German)
who started a social centre.

Nova Scotia, through Evelyn Pugh+ (U.S.A.) pioneering in the Cooperative Movement initiated by St. Francis Xavier University in Nova Scotia.

Paris, France, through Irene van der Does de Willebois (Dutch), working within the framework of the Russian Orthodox Church.

Rome, Italy, through Rosemary Goldie (Australian), working in the Permanent Committee for the Lay Apostolate.

New York, U.S.A. at the United Nations: Elisabeth Reid (Australian), Marjory Krijnen (Dutch), and others, working as representatives for U.F.E.R.

Through this remarkable expansion in a period of twelve years the Grail not only developed in numbers and scope, but gathered a wealth of experience and insight into the apostolate of women of different backgrounds. In the effort to assimilate these experiences it began to develop its own identity and method, a subject for a more detailed description to be found in the following chapter.

CHAPTER VII 1949-1961

GROWTH IN IDENTITY

The great ideal of the conversion of the world - through the efforts and capacities of women dedicated to the cause - making their mark next to that of men - in all fields of human endeavour - moved by a spirit of love: this found concrete application in this period in a great drive of missionary activity.

FOCUS ON MISSION COUNTRIES

Out of the twelve new countries where the Grail started working in this period, nine were on the African continent. This is not surprising. The missionary idea had been alive in the group from its beginnings. The first member, Margaret van Gilse, had been accepted by Father van Ginneken with the promise that she would be sent to Africa as a lay apostle. (At age eighteen she had imagined herself on a motor bike with a baptismal font behind her!). Now the promise became reality. After thirty years experience in guiding from Holland the growth of the Women of Nazareth, Margaret van Gilse set out for Johannesburg, South Africa, where Bishop Whelan had a property ready for the Grail in Rivonia. There, with Frances van der Schot who had come from Australia after leaving the national leadership in the hands of

Adelaide Crookall, she established a training centre for leaders in the lay apostolate.

At the same time Margaret turned her attention to other parts of Africa, parts which at that time were still called mission countries. A study tour was planned to gain more insights. Lydwine van Kersbergen, always the pioneer, came from the U.S.A. and from May till August 1952 Margaret and Lydwine travelled by car through Rhodesia, Nyassaland, Tanganyika, Kenya and Uganda, visiting Catholic mission posts, meeting with leaders and learning about the conditions of the people and countries. Lydwine also visited West Africa on this journey. Later, in 1954, Margaret made a second journey through East Africa, this time adding Ruanda and Urundi to her travel itinerary.

They found the Church in most of these countries waking up to the lay apostolate and to a stronger role of women within it. Foreign missionaries - still more numerous than indigenous priests - began to feel their inadequacy in dealing with the imminent changes and were seeking for qualified reinforcement. This was especially the case with the missionaries belonging to the Africa Mission Society founded by Cardinal Lavigerie, known as the White Fathers of Africa.

In order to understand each other better and to promote collaboration, a study week was organised in May 1955 at the Tiltenberg with three White Fathers from the field and sixteen Grail members of different nationalities. This week of intense interchange laid the foundation for a mutual respect and much fruitful collaboration. It provided the opening for the Grail's future work for the promotion of African women.

Another study tour was made in October-December 1954 by Marjory (Geertruid) Krijnen and Thérèse Tellegen through Ethiopia and the Sudan. The tour was organised at the request of Cardinal E. Tisserant of the Oriental Congregation in Rome, to gather information on the situation of the Christians in those countries. On a side trip to Cairo, where they visited the office of the Association of Christian Schools, contact was made for the first time with Simone Tagher, one of the leaders of the Association. Little did Marjory and Therese then guess that they were making acquaintance with a future International President of the Grail!

ACTIVITIES OF AN INSTITUTIONAL AND PROFESSIONAL CHARACTER

As can be seen from the list of new countries, the first two-or-three-somes who were sent for the beginnings had to engage in quite a variety of activities. Some of these were clearly in line with the idea of creating a women's movement; some were more within the framework of services set up by dioceses, such as schools, hospitals, social centres. Later, in some cases, a Movement did grow up around or from such institutions; but this was not always so, and certainly did not happen without a conscious effort on the part of the leaders.

Obviously such institutions were needed as centres of service for the population, and the Grail teams took their place among the many groups, organisations and initiatives engaged in the First Development Decade, when the rich countries had awakened to the plight of so many people elsewhere. This was the period of the United Nations' specialised

agencies like FAO, WHO, UNICEF; of the U.S.A.'s Point Four and Technical Assistance Programme, of the Co-operative Movement spread out from Antigonish in Nova Scotia, Canada, of the rise of the new methodology of Community Development, of the Colombo Plan, and many other new approaches.

It was also the time when several organisations sprang up for the purpose of preparing and supporting their members, men and women, in their work as professional helpers in the field. In Germany there was the "Missions Artzliches Institut" of Würzburg, already in existence since the early twenties; now other groups arose such as "Ad Lucem" in France, "AFI" in Belgium, "ALMA" in The Netherlands, "A.M.S." in Spain.

During a Missionary Congress in Rome in 1950, where for the first time in history a section for the laity was provided, collaboration between these groups was initiated; they formed a common secretariat (S.I.L.M.-International Lay Mission Secretariat) which somewhat later changed into a federation called U.C.C.I.

CONTACT WITH U.N.O.

In order to be in closer contact with the U.N. and its specialized agencies a new structure was formed in 1953 by the groups and movements federated in U.C.C.I. This new union, called U.F.E.R. (International Movement for Fraternal Union among Races and Peoples) obtained consultative status with the U.N. as a non-governmental organisation. The different movements took turns in appointing and supporting a delegate from their own ranks to the different agencies. In New York it was the Grail which filled this post. Lydwine van Kersbergen, Marjory Krijnen, Elisabeth Reid, Eileen Schaeffler and several others in the course of the years attended the relevant sessions of the United Nations. They represented the members of all the U.F.E.R. related organisations, including the hundreds of young women - medical doctors, nurses, teachers, social workers, laboratory assistants, librarians, youth workers who, through Grail and other channels, put their skill and energy at the disposal of their sisters and brothers, not only in Africa, but also in Indonesia, Oceania, Vietnam and in their own home countries as the need arose.

United Nations.

Lydwine van Kersbergen, Rachel Donders, Joan Overboss and others



THE ROLE OF THE NUCLEUS

In the expansion of the Grail in this period, with the exception of Portugal and Ruanda, Nucleus members were the ones who initiated the new ventures. They were assigned for this by the International President, naturally in consultation with the person herself and her National Leader. But this was not their only role. When the work grew and a more complex organisation evolved, it was from the Nucleus that a finally responsible person was appointed - again by the International President - for the guidance of the whole.

Furthermore, much preparation and training was needed for all the action going on, so that all would have interior strength and be able to 'live the spirit.' This was a task usually taken up by Nucleus members, nationally as well as internationally. Programmes with international participation for missionary work were conducted in The Netherlands (Ubbergen), in Scotland (Edinburgh), in the U.S.A. (Grailville and the Overseas Training Institute in Brooklyn), and in Australia (Springwood).

International programmes for Nucleus candidates were carried out in The Netherlands (Tiltenberg), Germany (Mulheim), U.S.A. (Grailville), and Australia (Springwood). For candidates from Africa for the Nucleus, as well as for women of other vocations, training programmes were launched at the Grail Centre in Mubende (1959).

As part of its task the Nucleus also took on responsibility for the financial and material side of building the Movement. In each country where feasible, a foundation was set up according to the laws of the country so that the Nucleus could act as a legal corporation. This was important - but more important was the acquisition of the necessary resources. In the spirit of total dedication every Nucleus member contributed everything she owned or earned, be it little or much, to the common fund. In that way property was obtained in some countries.

The responsible leaders sought for other sources, too. In a few cases assistance came from the Church which sometimes gave the use of a house, or lent money without interest. A great deal of help furthermore was provided by benefactors, lay people, relatives, friends, who understood the need and were sympathetic to the new ventures being undertaken. There is much in the history of the Grail to be grateful for, in this respect as well as in many others.

The functions of leadership and formation on international and national levels involved of course only a relatively small number of Nucleus members. All the others were at work, hand in hand with women of all walks of life, in city centres and rural areas, in schools and student centres, in hospitals, dispensaries and leprosaria, in catechetical programmes, family service and community work, in creative and applied art, in study, in hospitality for overseas students, in prayer centres, in interracial work, in short: in the apostolate of women, abroad and at home. And so the Grail grew.

WHAT IS THE GRAIL?

Who in the Grail has not met with that exasperating request: "Can you tell me in a few words what exactly is the Grail?"

The answers, if recorded, could make an interesting chapter, varied as they must have been according to circumstances, persons, and the moment in history.

What would have been the answer in 1961, toward the end of the period described in this chapter?

From the following half-fictional interview* an idea may be formed of the shape of the Grail in that year; different from 12 years before when nobody was yet quite sure what it was going to become; different, too, from its identity as the mature, internationally interwoven movement which would evolve in later years. The interviewer is a not too dull journalist; the Grail member who answers seems to know the ropes.

Interviewer: The Grail is a Catholic organisation, isn't it?

Grail member: Certainly, everybody in it is Catholic.

I: Is that on principle?

GM: It is more a matter of history. We have quite a bit of contact with women and groups from other Christian traditions, especially in The Netherlands, in Scotland and the U.S.A.; we could develop into a movement of Christian composition, but that is still for the future; the ecumenical dimension is not equally strong and alive everywhere.

I: The Grail belongs to Catholic Action?

GM: I suppose I should answer yes. But as we do not use the Catholic Action method of some specialized groups, I would rather use the term "lay apostolate," a more general concept.

I: What is your method then?

GM: Must we have a method?

I: What else can you have in order to be effective?

GM: Well, you could have a spirit, a vision, a conviction, a life-style, and that attracts people.

I: Isn't that rather vague?

GM: It isn't. It is very concrete. It is live people who share a common faith and hope. We believe that God has a plan for the world and we hope that this plan will come true in part through our efforts in this time - especially through the efforts of women. That is our calling.

I: Are you saying then that your method is a call to women?

GM: Exactly. From a small group a call has gone out and is taken up by others, by many, and so the ball rolls on.

(left out here are the usual questions about the beginnings, where, when, how, as these are facts and not subject to change).

I. Another question: how many members do you have?

GM: Not an unexpected query! In each of the countries there are probably hundreds of women who are somehow connected with the Grail. They take part in programmes of action, younger ones in programmes of

* based on personal memories of a Grail leader.

- formation, and others may just be living in the spirit of the Grail— or rather trying to do so in their own circumstances, without much organisational contact. Numbers with us are always in flux, so we do not care too much about them.
- I: So you actually do not have members, do you?
- GM: Recently we have started trying out the term 'Participants,' but I don't know if that term will stick. Nationally there are of course lists of all these participants - every country has its national administration - but we do not add them up internationally.
- I: And that Nucleus, that group which started the ball rolling, as you said?
- GM: Yes, that is different, far less fluid. The Nucleus really consists of members, for life time; they form one international body, together under one International President. There are now about 200 of them, of 17 different nationalities, spread all over the world.
- I: If I understand it correctly, this Grail consists of two elements: a Nucleus which is internationally organised and leads a Movement which is nationally organised?
- GM: Right; that's how it is at the moment.
- I: And which of the two is the most important?
- GM: Well, historically the Nucleus comes first, and in the past years stress has been quite strongly on its growth in numbers as well as in inner strength. But not for its own sake. Of course, Nucleus members have a right to be supported spiritually in a special way, because of their special life choice. But finally it is for the good of the whole that it exists. So, the 'raison d'etre' of the Nucleus as such is the Movement, and from that angle the Movement is the most important. Maybe there will come a time when they fully grow together internationally.
- I: Are there any signs of that discernible?
- GM: I think the Grail Review is such a sign. It is a publication sent out from the International Secretariat of the Grail in Amsterdam. When it started in 1953 it was sent only to the Nucleus members - naturally they could share the contents with all, nothing private about it. But now, since 1958, it goes to anyone who cares to make a subscription. You understand, this is bringing us all together much more.
- I: Do you have more on paper? Your Statutes for instance?
- GM: What we have in the line of Statutes is so terribly out-dated that it does not mean much. There is a Work group in The Netherlands trying to formulate something basic. In fact there are two work groups: one is composed of a number of theologians - Prof. Dr. J. Willebrands, Prof. Dr. J. Groot, Rector L. Wolf, Prof. H. Weterman, Prof. J. Loeff who is an expert on Canon Law - together with some national and international leaders; the other is called "East-West Encounter" and works on international understanding in order to develop some guide-lines for the whole.
- I: Do you think the results will bring changes in your structure and work?
- GM: Perhaps. For example up till now we have had a rather vertical type of relationship between leaders and members; in the early days it was really the leaders who gave the word and everybody

followed - not sheepishly, but in a responsible way. In these last years there is much more of a dialogue going on before decisions are made, and possibly there will be still more lateral sharing in the coming period.

I: The Grail people do not seem to be afraid of change. What is the impetus, the principle behind this mobility?

GM: For one thing, we are meeting new people all the time, new cultures, new circumstances, and it is a question of adaptation and integration. And then, we are still young. The great majority is under 40. That means, we look toward the future, we are always still in search for the better, for the new, for the ultimate...

I: Like the old quest for the Grail?

GM: Like the old quest for the Grail, the quest for a far and high spiritual good, which keeps drawing us on.

End of the Interview.

ELECTIONS OF NEW INTERNATIONAL PRESIDENCY

At the beginning of 1961 the work of the Committee of Theologians and Grail leaders had led to two papers: a 'Charter' for the Nucleus and 'Statutes' for the Movement. The idea was that in the coming period these would be presented to the Grail generally as a proposal. One small part of the documents, however, became operative immediately.

During the twelve years of her presidency Rachel Donders had been assisted by two 'counsellors,' in accordance with the "Blue Booklet." Dé Groothuizen and Trees van Voorst tot Voorst had been fulfilling this function in the last period; their task had been an advisory one.

Now, after due correspondence among the National Leaders and with the approval of the Bishop of Haarlem, it was decided that when Rachel came to the end of her second term of office as International President, her successor would have two International Vice-Presidents next to her, who would fully share in the international responsibility and decision-making.

And so it happened. After a rather long process of the selection of candidates and an opinion poll among all Nucleus members, the formal election meeting was held at The Tiltenberg, the International Headquarters, under the presidency of Bishop J. Dodewaard, who had succeeded Bishop Huibers shortly before.

Those elected were:

International President: Magdalene Oberhoffer, German. For many years she had been the medical doctor in charge of Rubaga Hospital in Uganda and National Leader of the Grail there;
Vice-Presidents: Dolores Brien, U.S.A., member of the National Committee of the Grail in U.S.A., and Bénédicte Milcent, French, who had been working in Djakarta and Semarang, Indonesia.

A new leaf was turned in the Grail history.

For more details about the period described in this and in the former chapter, see the issues of "Grail Review" and "Letter to the Nucleus" published by the International President and International Secretariat between 1952 and 1961.

CHAPTER VIII 1961-1967

CRISIS AND RENEWAL

THE TIME

Then came the stormy '60s, a decade when the world experienced social upheaval, protest marches, demonstrations, violence, overthrow of the existing order. It seemed as if every group and sub-group suddenly became aware of its human rights. Movements for autonomy and independence changed the map of the world; student movements turned ancient hierarchical relationships upside-down; the anti-war protesters burnt draft cards and spilled red ink, symbolic of blood; the civil rights movement altered old patterns of society; the sexual revolution shocked humankind into hitherto unknown attitudes towards some sexual behaviours; women's movements cast off women's traditional attributes of gentleness and submission, shouting for liberation; and the whole world of the young seemed to be carried forward on a great wave of faith in the possibility of change, expressed in the protest song reverberating through all ranks: We shall overcome! Grail members were also roused by this social revolution, felt attracted to some of the causes, took part in the chorus - sometimes with hesitations or misgivings. It was unsettling to make the transfer from an idealism which spoke in traditional Christian terms to a new language of opposition and remonstrance, from a security found in like-

mindfulness and harmonious development to a readiness for protest and criticism, from the effort to put a Christian stamp on society in all aspects to facing the appearance of the 'secular city' (title of a work by Harvey Cox). Unsettling and not necessarily right. Discernment was needed, but where to find norms? Christianity, the Church, parents, leaders, traditions, everything seemed so irrelevant, out-dated in this new atmosphere in the world!

VATICAN COUNCIL II - THE GRAIL

Hope was engendered when the announcement came of Vatican Council II. In the Grail, as elsewhere, there was at first some hesitant waiting: what was this gathering of more than two thousand bishops going to mean in terms of answers to the pressing problems of life?

But soon: yes, it is going to be a renewal! Yes, there is an effort to come to an authentic and creative presence of Christianity in the midst of this changing universe.

Soon several members of the Grail became involved around the Council; Alberta Lückner of Germany was accredited to the Press Corps in Rome; De Groothuizen, who at the time was working in Rome, organised a secretariat for the African Bishops, with volunteers from The Netherlands.

In other places Grail members were taking up eagerly the pronouncements and teachings of the Council Fathers and helped to transmit them in publications and through study and discussion groups of all kinds.

There may have been a tiny grain of self-congratulation in the joy they felt. Wasn't the Grail one of the movements which already held some advanced ideas, inspired by the new theology? Didn't the Constitution on the Liturgy - the first subject tackled by the Council - affirm what the Grail had been practising for years? Wasn't the Movement already in the forefront - together with others - of renewal in the field of biblical spirituality, in the reading of the signs of the time?

Before long this naive rejoicing gave place to the intuition that something much deeper was at stake; that for the Church and for all its members it was not just a question of adaptation to some new cultural phenomena, but of a drastic re-focussing of the Gospel, as a divine response to the central problems of the age. This re-thinking of traditional concepts, the development of a number of central doctrinal positions at Vatican II, would finally represent something like a 'quantum leap,'* a truly new self-understanding of the Church, founded on theological reflection, on a new reading of the Scriptures and on contemporary Catholic experience. This, however, took several years and the whole process of questioning, searching, examining, the lifting of the silence behind which the inadequacies of the system and the faults of the institutional Church had remained hidden, brought with it painful tensions, obscurities, confusion.

* Gregory Baum in "The Credibility of the Church Today"

CRISIS YEARS

The Grail, as a movement within the Church geared to a mission within the world, shared in this confusion as it began to permeate the Christian and human community. This was especially the case among members of the age group between thirty and forty years, and among those of U.S.A. and Dutch culture. The U.S.A. and The Netherlands were among the countries where the crisis provoked by the times was the strongest.

In a meeting of about twenty Grail leaders from these countries with the Presidency, in Louvain, Belgium, January 1962, the crisis came into the open. In the ensuing years quite a number of Nucleus members, deeply anguished by the tension decided upon a change in their life-orientation. What influenced them was primarily the new outlook on the Church and their own personal call and role in the Church. Vatican Council II brought a revalidation of the general priesthood of the laity and a revalidation of the state of marriage. Against this background of new theological thinking a number of Nucleus members discovered and admitted that they did not have a specific vocation to life in community and celibacy. Originally they had chosen the Nucleus as almost the only possibility at that time to engage themselves fully as lay women in the Church. It was only now, as alternate openings revealed themselves, that they recognized their more general call.

Some entered into a new situation as single women, in order to develop their professional skills and talents autonomously; some married, in several cases the husbands being former members of the clergy. There were others who left because of their conviction that the Grail had played out its role and that the new climate in the Church made such a movement superfluous. And some plainly could not believe in it any more and felt out of their depth, alienated through the changed atmosphere of thought.

Right through this decade these were painful experiences for all concerned - for the women who left the Grail community, for those who remained, and also for the leaders who could not have foreseen or prevented this turn of events. Magdalene Oberhoffer as International President dealt with it valiantly. However, not everything was dark or negative. Sufficient strength and conviction was still there and enough loyal support from participants and friends to go on building the Grail, and that more than ever in a sharing of responsibilities.

SHARED RESPONSIBILITY

The first steps towards a change in the forms of leadership were taken on the national level. To respond to the call for a wider sharing of overall responsibilities, National Committees were set up in the countries where the Grail had taken root.

In the U.S.A. Lydwine van Kersbergen had resigned as National President in 1961. Her task was taken over by a National Committee of four members - one of whom, Eileen Schaeffler, was the National President.

In 1960 Trees van Voorst tot Voorst succeeded Dé Groothuizen who had been National President in The Netherlands since 1949. Experiments had already been going on there with a Steering Committee and in this period Trees was assisted by two National Vice-Presidents and two Committee members appointed after consultation with all Nucleus members in the country.

In Australia a National Board of four members was appointed in January 1964 to assist the National President, Adelaide Crookall, in her task. In Uganda a step forward was made when the building of the movement was disentangled from the Grail Medical, Educational and Social Service. This involved more leadership and responsibility on the part of the African Grail members. Johny Storimans (Dutch), who had taken over from Magdalene Oberhoffer in 1961, kept the overall leadership.

In the international field, too, a widening of responsibility was sought. To replace one of the International Vice-Presidents who had left the Grail Community in 1964, an ad-hoc Advisory Board was formed to assist the International President. In May 1965, when the second Vice-President withdrew, an election took place to fill this post again. In this election Maria de Lourdes Pintasilgo, Portuguese, was chosen as International Vice-President for a period of two years.

With these changes the one head system of leadership in the Grail definitely came to an end.

MOVE TO PARIS

Some time before, in September 1963, a long planned transfer had taken place: the International Secretariat of the Grail moved from the Tiltenberg to Paris, France. A house had been acquired there in Rue du Dr. Germain Sée, soon to be the hub of international activity. This departure from the old, almost traditional, headquarters, the former 'motherhouse,' may have aggravated the difficulties in The Netherlands, where for so long the Grail had been thriving on the inspiration and activity generated by the international presence. A new meaning and task had to be created for the Tiltenberg. It was, however, definitely an advantage for the whole Movement to find its centre in a place where the renewal of theological thought and spiritual search went together in a balanced way. The International Grail was greatly helped by the thinkers of the Church in France in the period which now began.

A PROCESS OF UP-DATING "AGGIORNAMENTO"

In order to come to a true renewal, the leaders in the newly established International Secretariat in Paris set plans in motion for an aggiornamento process in the whole Grail. The term aggiornamento came from good Pope John XXIII, and many institutions and religious congregations in the Church held their aggiornamento after the Council, urged by the Church itself. The leaders in the Grail, however, had conceived the idea already in 1963, during the first session of Vatican II. The events that followed after this moment of inspiration formed as it were a chain, connecting the Grail period before with the period after Vatican Council II, each link of the chain representing a value indispensable for its function. The links in the Aggiornamento Process were perceived as:

- . Challenge from the side of the International Presidency and response from the membership;
- . Involvement of all through consultation, research and documentation;
- . Dialogue on national and international levels;
- . Formulation of a first synthesis;
- . Continued consultation and exchange between all;
- . Final Decisions in an International Assembly.

THE FIRST LINK IN THE CHAIN: CHALLENGE AND RESPONSE

In the light of the social upheaval of the days and the new thinking in the Church, there was a growing conviction that the relation of the Grail to the secular world had to be scrutinized, that the basic inspiration of Father van Ginneken had to be re-studied, that new modes of relating among the members had to be devised. After sounding out the feelings of the National Leaders, Magdalene Oberhoffer sent out three letters to all Nucleus members, in which she put the challenge before them: Do we feel the need for renewal? Shall we dare to go in for it, whatever the outcome? Are you ready to do your part whatever the cost?

The spontaneous reactions from all corners of the Grail world were unanimously positive, even enthusiastic. The challenge was accepted. The International Presidency then formed an Aggiornamento Committee to start the process.

THE SECOND LINK IN THE CHAIN: INVOLVEMENT

The core of the Aggiornamento Committee in Paris was formed by Maria de Lourdes Pintasilgo (Portuguese) and Janet Kalven (U.S.A.). From this Committee a list of 56 questions was sent to all Nucleus members, to be shared with Grail participants where feasible. These questions were envisaged as a basis for consultation and had been drawn up by Eleanor Walker + and Mariette Wickes (U.S.A.). They dealt with seven topics: the essentials of the Grail; relevance of the Grail to the Church and World of today, person and community; movement; spirit; the Nucleus; formation and guidance.



Paris International Secretariat.
 Brigid Niland (back to camera), Eleanor Walker,
 Maria de Lourdes Pintasilgo, Teresa Santa Clara
 Gomes, Mariette Wickes, Elisabeth Reid

In small discussion groups, or individually, the members were asked to develop and express their own thinking on these subjects, grounded in their own experience. It was understood that the new shaping of the Grail would depend on the answers to this Basis for Consultation.

An intense soul-searching and exchange of opinions began on all levels. Never before had the members been asked to share their insights and experience on such a large scale or in such depth; never had they felt they were taken so seriously in their responses. From the point of view of participation, openness of exchange, sharing and expression, the consultation was a real advance. Replies were received in Paris from 32 groups in 14 countries, representing 187 individuals, and from 129 individuals from 12 countries. Besides the consultation, a number of members who were competent in specific fields were involved in the more specialized work of research in three main areas: spiritual basis of the Grail, relevance of the Grail in the world today and structure of the Grail Movement.

These members were the consultants, working together with experts from outside. For each of the areas a Co-ordinating Research Committee was formed and altogether some 50 persons were involved in this aspect of the aggiornamento process.

Thirdly there was the task of providing study material relevant to the issues, in other words, documentation. For this purpose the 'Grail Review' was used, but as this organ did not have sufficient space, a new vehicle was created for the building up of a common background of ideas, a common vocabulary and a frame of reference. A tentative beginning of a 'Grail Documentation Bulletin' had already been made in 1961. This publication now came into its own. During the aggiornamento period twelve Bulletins were issued, containing substantial articles on the theological aspects of the themes. The staff in the International Secretariat in Paris did the work of selecting the articles and publishing these Bulletins. A continuous interaction was maintained, not only among the membership, but also among the persons involved in consultation, research and documentation. There was a regular exchange of research papers, surveys of the responses to the consultation, and significant new questions which emerged. The ad-hoc Advisory Board was kept informed of the state of the process. Altogether there were twenty nine interchanges between Paris and the membership during the whole process.

THE THIRD LINK IN THE CONNECTING CHAIN: DIALOGUE

The fifteen months of consultation and research culminated in an international Grail meeting - the first of its kind - from July 12 till August 1, 1965 at the Tiltenberg. This meeting was envisaged as an occasion for a creative face-to-face dialogue. There were 74 participants, representing the Grail in 15 countries, 46 of them with the right to vote. These were not only Nucleus members: the U.S.A. had sent delegates who had been carrying national or regional responsibilities together with Nucleus members.

It was at this meeting that for the very first time the role of the Nucleus was questioned. The idea emerged to replace the Nucleus by a kind of core group consisting of women of different life-choices. This idea, however, was not developed. It was put in the background by some,

forgotten by others.

The subjects for dialogue in this international meeting were largely those brought to the foreground by the general consultation and reflected major themes of Vatican Council II. They were grouped under three headings: The Grail's involvement in the world today; the Grail as a 'communio' within the People of God, and the development of Christian maturity in the light of the Paschal Mystery.

The hope was that the meeting would succeed in framing a response to certain questions in these three areas of Grail life, and that this response could become a guideline for further growth.

After a day of prayer in a spirit of openness and communality, there followed two weeks of dialogue among all participants; daily they found a central moment in the celebration of the Eucharist. To ensure a responsible theological direction two lectures were given, one by Professor A. Dondeyne of Louvain University on "Church and World in the Perspective of Vatican II," the other by Professor J. Groot, Dutch peritus at the Council, on "The Church as the People of God." In a third lecture, Paula Larsen, a Dutch Nucleus member competent in psychology, spoke on "Christian Maturity."

In small discussion groups and in interaction among them the subjects were deepened, problems were located, tentative responses tested, agreements formulated. It was thus possible, on the final day of the dialogue session, to present a first synthesis of the discussions for further amendment or affirmation.

THE FOURTH LINK IN THE CHAIN: FORMULATION

Members of a Formulation Committee bowed over the material and after two days there emerged from their table two short documents. The first, titled "Guidelines," formulated policy for the next two years in the areas covered by the meeting: the second, "Structures," brought a provisional structure for international government and recommendations for wider participation in decision-making at national levels. For these national structures the document was directed as much as possible to actual situations. Distinctions were made between three forms of national organisations: Grail Movements with National Presidents, Grail entities with National Leaders and Grail Teams with Leaders. This responded to a desire to present the Grail in its current reality, and to stress the national bases from which leadership was expected to emerge.

Finally the voting members of the meeting came together for the election of an International Board which would function for two years and meet twice a year with the Presidency for the overall direction of the Movement. Elected were: Eileen Schaeffler (U.S.A.). Teresa Santa Clara Gomes (Portuguese), Anne Hope (South African), and Elisabeth Caminada (Dutch, at work in Brasil since 1949).

This International Aggiornamento Meeting with its wide representation, its sessions of dialogue and deliberation, its prayer events, its light moments of celebration and fun, and its concrete results in documents for the guidance of the whole, was to become a prototype for several international meetings in the future, meetings which from 1967 onwards were called International General Assemblies (I.G.A.'s). In fact, the history

of the International Grail can from now on be traced from I.G.A. to I.G.A. , each one being a milestone, an evaluation of the recent past and a thrust forward into the nearest future.

After the meeting of 1965, this 'nearest future' was to last just two years. It was to be a period of further study and exchange, particularly on the Nucleus, of experimenting, and of implementing the results of the process so far. In fact, it was going to be a new link in the chain connecting the past with the present.

THE FIFTH LINK IN THE CHAIN: MORE CONSULTATION, BASED ON PRACTICE

To come to a true renewal and not just an adaptation, many more aspects of the Grail had to be clarified, re-thought, re-formulated. This was especially the case with the life and government of the Nucleus. In the '65 meeting for lack of time, this subject had not been treated adequately. In the years after the meeting a whole exchange of proposals, comments, new formulations, and still more proposals was conducted. In 1966 a special study meeting was held in Paris among some Nucleus members. All this resulted in a final document to be discussed in the next international meeting of Nucleus members and then to be presented to the International General Assembly.

Besides this, a study of the idea found in Father van Ginneken's works was continued by special committees. Experts and consultants from outside and inside the Grail brought in relevant elements of contemporary theological thought and scriptural interpretation. The legal side of the proposed Grail documents was submitted to an expert for advice and comment. All through the two years these consultations continued on the basis of questionnaires and of meetings on different levels.

DAILY CONCERNS AND GROWTH

What also went on - with new impetus - was the ordinary Grail work in the fifteen countries where the Grail was established. It was not forgotten that daily life with its struggles and achievements, its disappointments and new insights, its fatigue and rebound, its rhythm and search, was the real matrix of all development.

Efforts continued everywhere to reach out to young women and to educate them for commitment. There was a new emphasis on interaction with married women and women in professions. There was a growing interest in the ecumenical movement, and an almost universal concern for social action. Formation was carried out on the national level, and one international training session for Nucleus candidates was held for 4 weeks in July 1966. In this period there was a shift in emphasis from lay missionary work to 'volunteer service in developing areas,' making it possible to collaborate more concretely with national and international agencies like U.S. Peace Corps, the C.C.V.S. (Coordinating Committee for Volunteer Service) initiated by UNESCO, and other non-denominational organisations.

Growth took place in a number of countries where somewhat earlier a Grail presence had been introduced. During this period the Grail came into being in the following countries:*

* The development of the Grail in these countries is described in a separate volume.

- 1962: Japan, where, with the encouragement of the rector of Sophia University in Tokyo, Akiko Morishita+ (Japanese) and Marie-Elisabeth Maréchal (Belgian) started to teach and work with women students; later in the year Rachel Donders (Dutch) joined them for further support.
- 1963: Italy, where, in Rome, from 1961 on a number of Grail members from various countries had been at work or studying. This number was augmented during Vatican Council II and specific Grail programmes were set up.
- 1964: Nigeria, to which Evelyn Pugh+ (U.S.A.), had moved from her work in Ghana, in order to initiate programmes with Nigerian women.

In 1967 the first steps were made towards a start in India. Elisabeth Reid+ (Australian) was appointed the executive secretary of Action for Food Production, an ecumenical agency set up to counteract food shortages. Elisabeth began immediately to sow the seed for Grail development in the sub-continent.

A new and interesting experiment in these years was the beginning of regional groupings in the Grail. Teams and members in Portugal, Spain, France and Italy, feeling that they had communal roots, spiritually and culturally, began an exchange of experiences and view-points and started meeting with one another. They met in the spirit through a monthly communication called "Graal-Nouvelles de l'Europe Latine" and in person on many occasions. There were summer camps in Portugal (Quinta Tremôa), a Christmas meeting in France (Lyon), study sessions in France (Taizé), visits and shorter encounters with each other and with members of the Presidency and the Board whenever possible.

Another new initiative was the Grail Book and Art Shop started as a venture in ecumenism by Nora McGrath (Australian) and Florence Henderson (U.S.A.) in Edinburgh, Scotland. In those years it was a remarkable effort with a tangible unifying influence right in the heart of traditional Presbyterian Scotland.

As formerly, communications were maintained through the 'Grail Review' which appeared ten times in the period of the '60s, and the 'Grail International Newsletter' (eight times). Nucleus members received a regular 'Letter to the Nucleus' which at this stage was used particularly for a consultation among them on the proposed Guidelines and Structures which dealt with their life and community.

Four 'Documentation Bulletins' appeared on the subjects of: The Christ Mystery, Communio, An Overall View of the Council, and Mission and the Missions.

AUDIENCE WITH POPE PAUL VI

In the context of the Aggiornamento of the Grail it was especially significant that an expression of gratitude for the Council could be given to Pope Paul VI himself. For this purpose Maria de Lourdes Pintasilgo (International Vice-President) and Nicoletta Crosti (Italian) were received in a short private audience on March 23, 1966. The Pope showed his interest in the Grail, gave his blessing for all, and advised them:

"Keep faithful always to the Church and to Jesus Christ."

THE SIXTH LINK IN THE CHAIN: FINAL DECISIONS IN AN INTERNATIONAL GENERAL ASSEMBLY

As the six-year term of office of Magdalene Oberhoffer as International President and the two-year term of Maria de Lourdes Pintasilgo as International Vice President were nearing their end, preparations had to be made for the election of a new International Presidency and also for an International Board as provided for in the new structures.

Formerly the election of an International President had been a matter for the Nucleus only, represented by the national leaders and Nucleus delegates. This time the proposing of nominees, the screening process, the composing of the list of candidates, the choosing of the voting delegates, the number of votes allotted to each country, all bore the mark of a new attitude: a wider participation in all respects.

In July 1967 the Tiltenberg received the delegates to the international meeting: 54 of them, representing the Grail in Africa (Egypt, South Africa, and East and West Africa as regions), North America (U.S.A.), South America (Brasil and Surinam), Australia, Asia (Indonesia, Japan, Singapore), and Europe (Germany, Italy, Portugal, The Netherlands, Scotland).

A preliminary meeting of the Nucleus was held to draw together the results of the preceding consultation on the Nucleus vocation and its structures.

Then the International General Assembly took place, from July 16 till July 23. As in the meeting of 1965 the programme contained a day of prayer, a lecture - this time by Prof. H. Fortman from the University of Nymegen on "The Community of Believers in a Changing World," exchange of view-points and experiences through workshops and plenary sessions, and finally a deliberative meeting to take the necessary decisions for the whole Grail. These decisions, reached by consensus, comprised:

1) Ratification of "Guidelines of the Grail"

Part A of these Guidelines consisted of three major sections: The Conversion of the World; Communion with the People of God; Christian Maturity.

Part B, a one-page document, gave the essential traits of the Nucleus vocation and its relation to the whole.

2) Ratification of "Structures of the Grail." This document contained features of national and international organisation and government. Part A for the whole, Part B specifically for the Nucleus.

3) Affirmation of a set of "Recommendations" in five areas of apostolic work, as policy directives for the coming four years. These five areas were chosen because of the vital developments taking place in those fields and because they presented a particular challenge to the Grail as 'signs of the time.' They were: Ecumenism, International Collaboration, Social Action in a Changing World, Women and Work, Continuing Education.

On the last two days Election Meetings took place, the first day presided over by the bishop of Haarlem, Mgr. T. Zwartkruis, for the International

President and Vice-President, the second for the International Board. Elected were: Eileen Schaeffler (U.S.A.), as International President and Maria de Lourdes Pintasilgo (Portuguese), as International Vice-President.

Teresa Santa Clara Gomes (Portuguese), Alison Healey (Australian), Simone Tagher (Egyptian), Akke van Dam (Dutch), Alberta Lückner (German) were elected to the International Board.

With this International General Assembly the Aggiornamento Process of the Grail was completed.



International Board, 1971.

1st Row: Simone Tagher, Maria de Lourdes Pintasilgo,
Eileen Schaeffler, Magdalene Oberhoffer,
Alberta Lucker

2nd Row: Teresa Santa Clara Gomes, Akke van Dam,
Alison Healey

A LOOK AT THE RENEWAL

Looking at the decisions of the I.G.A. the question may be asked: What was really new or renewed, as compared with the period before the Aggiornamento?

Leaving details aside, the following features may be discerned:

- New documents formulating the Grail in its entirety. Formerly only the Nucleus had known Statutes and Rules international in character.

- New recognition of the International Grail as a complex whole. "... a composition of ever new and diverse efforts to fulfill its mission, shared by women of different vocations in collaboration and interaction with each other." (Preamble to the Guidelines). And: "The Structures are only one expression of the full international life of the Grail; they presuppose a rich variety of international relationships." (Preamble to the Structures). Formerly the accepted basic formulation simply spoke of "a women's movement with a nucleus."
- New concept of what the Nucleus contributed to the Grail as a whole, namely "elements of freedom, continuity and unity." Formerly the role of the Nucleus was seen in terms of leadership, initiative, maintenance and inspiration.
- New principle of shared responsibility, expressed in participative structures, for the Movement as well as for the Nucleus; for the latter it was particularly the formation of a Nucleus Council. Formerly leadership and decision making had followed a vertical line.
- New internationally accepted directives for definite areas of apostolic work. Formerly every country or Grail entity decided upon its fields of work and policy, in direct contact with the International President only.
- Renewed vision of the conversion of the world - original purpose of the Grail - in terms of a renewed understanding of Christianity and world and the dynamic relation between them.
- Renewed acknowledgement of the roots of the Grail in a historical moment, its ensuing development and the desire to remain faithful to the original inspiration.

What did not come through in the documents, but was nevertheless a fact, was that a body of common thought had been formed. This was based on the study of Father van Ginneken's lectures and writings for the Grail, on contemporary theological positions and on a re-reading of the Scriptures in the light of modern exegesis and experience.

Through Vatican Council II the Church had found a new self-identity as "the People of God en route," had brought forward the concept of collegiality and had initiated a process towards more lateral sharing. In this light, and through their aggiornamento process, Grail members found themselves affirmed and renewed in their personal vocation, their common mission and their communal development as a leaven in the world.

Whether the spirit among the Grail members was renewed in depth, vigour, availability, was difficult to assess at that precise moment. Much of it would come to light in the coming years, when the new directives were to be implemented. Much of it would never be revealed outwardly, belonging as it does to the realm of the Spirit hidden in the heart.

CHAPTER IX 1967-1971

THE GRAIL: A HAPPENING

THE TIME

It is in the decade of the '60s - when an awed world sees a person set floating footsteps on the moon; when a war in Vietnam brings endless sufferings; when newly independent nations in Africa come into their own; when people in Latin America become more and more aware of the causes of poverty & oppression; when representatives of the great world religions begin to find each other for prayer and peace; when the sexual revolution is taking hold on people's lives; when thousands of young women and men roam the world. They have their own songs and music, their own style of dress and ornaments, their sleeping places, their own language, and they like to think in terms of "Happenings." Happenings, they say, are experiences-together of newness and creativity emerging from conditions of inner freedom, freedom to be oneself.

THE GRAIL: EXPERIENCES-TOGETHER

Maybe it was as a reaction to all the papers in the former period and the stress on structures, that some of the vibrations of this sub-culture of the young caught on in the Grail. "The Grail is - and should be - a Happening!", a Board member pronounced in one of the official

international publications. That seems true indeed. Looking back on its history, one sees how all the developments - from the first small group to youth movement, from youth movement to expansion across the seas, from expansion to national consolidation, and from consolidation to a leap towards the horizon of internationality - are experiences-together based on a free response to circumstances and to the signs of the time.

Now the renewal engendered in the former period had to be experienced-together. It is one thing to see the necessity of renewal and to formulate Guidelines, and quite another thing to assimilate the changes in daily life. Moreover, where in some national branches renewal had to be brought into out-dated structures and ideas, there were other countries where the whole Grail was still new, notably in East and West Africa. In Uganda, Tanzania, Ghana and Nigeria, the lay missionary work of Grail members had sparked a response among local women. With the encouragement of Grail members from overseas, they had begun to form their own indigenous Grail women's movement.

Regional meetings for the sake of clarifying the Guidelines were held in Nigeria and Ghana, where Eileen Schaeffler, the International President, was present. In East Africa participants met for exchange in Kampala, Uganda. Such meetings had their distinctive flavour. The International Grail owes much to the human warmth, simple joyfulness and talent for celebration of the African branches which came in in this period. In other countries the decisions of the International General Assembly of 1967 were also taken up and studied in the context of daily life of persons and groups, in their own culture and according to their own vocation. A special effort had to be made in this respect for the life of the Nucleus.

NUCLEUS MATTERS

The International General Assembly of 1967 created a Nucleus Council for the inspiration and guidance of this group at the core of the Movement. The members of this Council chosen by and from the Nucleus were: Magdalene Oberhoffer, Anne Hope and Brigid Niland+. Their task was to assist the International President, Eileen Schaeffler, in an advisory capacity.

Thus the International Presidency worked with two bodies: the International Board for the Movement as a whole, entitled to develop policy in accordance with the Guidelines, and a Nucleus Council as an advisory body for Nucleus matters. This last point had a special background: it conveyed the conviction, common among a great number of Nucleus members, that the final authority should rest in one person, the International President. The basis for this conviction was that every Nucleus member in her act of dedication had pledged total obedience to the International President and all her lawful successors. It took time, patience, prayer and much reflection for the Nucleus as a body to grasp the changes which had been set in motion through the new Guidelines and Structures.

The difficulties at this time did not lie so much in the question of obedience. That there would be more dialogue than authoritative decision, that many decisions in daily life would be left more to the person herself in discussion with her peer group than made by a leader,

that she would be able to discern the Will of God in her life more often through other channels than through the vertical line connecting her with authority, all this was no big problem for most of the members, as they grew to a certain maturity. However, the question of life in virginity came more and more into the foreground. Certainly the new ideas and practice of sexuality in a person's life had something to do with this, as also the controversy in the Catholic Church about the celibacy of the priesthood. In general, the prevailing atmosphere in some countries was not very supportive for a life of total dedication in virginity.

Another cause of difficulties may have been the fact that many of the Nucleus members had made their dedication at a very young age and that they had not been prepared for the big changes taking place in the spiritual climate. They found little to fall back on in these times of turmoil. In the period of the sixties the Nucleus lost about one third of its membership. This did not mean that all relations were broken. Although in some cases there was a turning away, many of the former members remained deeply connected with the Grail as a movement of women of all walks of life, loyal to the spirit of dedication. Interaction between persons of different vocations went on and gained in depth through mutual understanding. For the lawful successors of the first authority in the Grail Nucleus, however, this was not a time of easy decisions and guidance. "We had our difficult moments," said one of the leaders at the end of this period. In the light of what happened in the life of so many, this was certainly an understatement.

New life was springing up, however. In 1968 a young Dutch woman made her dedication in the Nucleus as well as a French woman, an Italian, a German, two Africans and an Australian. These were experiences-together of newness and creativity indeed, emerging from conditions of inner freedom, freedom to be oneself.

THE FIVE AREAS OF APOSTOLIC ENGAGEMENT

In the I.G.A. of 1967 recommendations had been made to engage in five particular areas of work: Ecumenism, International Collaboration, Social Action, Women and Work, and Continuing Education. These areas were not to supersede the action programmes in the different countries which were geared to local needs and possibilities, neither was it necessary for every local group to take up each of the five areas. The idea was that everywhere leaders and participants would develop a sensitivity to these issues and would support initiatives actively when they saw suitable perspectives, nationally as well as internationally. In the context of this historic survey only the international efforts can be mentioned.

ECUMENISM: The conviction grew that ecumenism was in the first place an attitude, a basic attitude demanded of all Christians, but all the more so of Grail members who in their own Grail tradition found a living inspiration for it. An element of growth was: the beginning of participation in the Grail by women of other Christian traditions. The Catholic basis of the Grail remained firm and affirmed, but the members felt committed to what the Catholic theologian Father Tucci, S.J., expressed in Uppsala at the Fourth Assembly of the World Council of Churches as "a dynamic concept of a joint movement towards unity...a search enabling all to grow towards the

plenitude of the Church of Christ." The Grail saw in the membership of women of other denominations - even if there were only a few, and these particularly in the U.S.A. - a sign of its participation in the search for fulness.

In 1968 the International Presidency in Paris was approached by Father J. Dupré, W.F., envoy of the Holy See, with the request for assistance in the setting up and maintenance of an Ecumenical Institute for Higher Theological Studies, to be located between Jerusalem and Bethlehem, on a hill called Tantur. The initiative for this Institute had been taken in Rome in a meeting between Pope Paul VI and the group of Protestant observers to Vatican II. The building and organisation took some years of preparation, and during that time an ecumenical team of three members was formed to shoulder the task for which the Grail had been invited. The team formed by Anne Mathews (Irish), Thecla Schiphorst (Dutch), and Marjory Turnbull (Scottish, Presbyterian), went to Tantur in 1970 for a contract period of two years.

Another insertion into the ecumenical sphere was the work of two Grail members in Rome, Corinna de Martini (Swiss) and Josette Kersters (Belgian), in the office of Cardinal J. Willebrands, head of the Secretariat of Christian Unity. Both had already been involved in helping Cardinal Willebrands in the '50s, when he was still in The Netherlands as president of the major seminary at Warmond and initiator of ecumenical work. Corinna started work in Rome in 1961 and Josette was there for a short period in 1961 and later from 1969 onwards.

INTERNATIONAL COLLABORATION: Efforts continued to attract and prepare volunteers for work in specific countries. The programmes of training for overseas service in The Netherlands, Germany, Scotland and the U.S.A. were evaluated. Based on experiences in Africa and Asia, significant changes were made in order to synchronize the training and placements. Meetings of returnees were organised to help their re-insertion into the home countries.

Goodwill relationships were growing through formal and informal meetings with foreign students from countries where the Grail existed, as well as from places where it was not at work. A relatively new field was concern for foreign workers and other minority ethnic groups in France, Germany, South Africa and Portugal.

Collaboration continued with Church international organisations as well as with non-denominational movements. These included:

- Concilium de Laicis; this Council accepted the official documents of the International General Assembly of 1967. The relationship of the International Grail to the Holy See operated through this channel, and Grail members were asked regularly to co-operate in committees, conferences and consultations organised by it. Fifteen members of the Grail took part in The World Congress for the Lay Apostolate in Rome, October 1967.
- Justitia et Pax; several Grail members participated in consultations in Rome and cooperated in regional and national sections.
- U.F.E.R. (see page 50); Eileen Schaeffler was elected vice-president of this Non-Governmental Organisation at the United Nations and efforts

were made to define the membership of Grail groupings and persons. U.F.E.R. was one of the channels used by the Grail to draw international attention to torture in Brazilian prisons.

- UNESCO; Through U.F.E.R. the International Grail had the possibility of attending UNESCO meetings as a member of a Non-Governmental Organisation. Particularly those meetings dealing with youth and educational questions were attended by Grail members who then passed the information on to Grail projects in the field. The Grail made a well-received intervention at UNESCO through U.F.E.R. regarding race discrimination.
- C.C.V.S.; The Grail started a training project in Paris with girls who applied for overseas service through this Co-ordinating Committee for Volunteer Service. Grail members attended some of the C.C.V.S. international meetings, including one in Bulgaria.

Particularly helpful in the context of international collaboration was the work of D (Maria)Groothuizen in Rome. From 1961 to 1974 she was the liaison between the Vatican Representative to FAO, Msgr. L. Ligutti and Church organisations. Joan Overboss+ worked in Rome on the staff of SEDOS, an agency promoting collaboration among the twenty six missionary-sending religious institutes which had established this service. Marie Therese McDermitt worked in Mexico with the Pan-American Health Organisation, a regional branch of WHO. Marie Therese was consultant in Nursing Education, and her zone-office covered four countries: Mexico, Cuba, Haiti and the Dominican Republic. Alberta L cker became deeply involved in the World Conference on Religion and Peace which brought together leaders of the great world religions in a unique effort to share the responsibility of building a peaceful world community.

SOCIAL ACTION IN A CHANGING WORLD: New thinking was emerging in this field of work and also a change in terminology. "Development" had been the term, especially since President John Kennedy in his speech to the United Nations Organisation had called for a "Decade of Development." Awareness was growing that "Development" seemed too limited to one kind of socio-economic alteration to be useful as a term to describe the wider action which the Grail was seeking. "Social Action" had at first seemed a better term, but was now replaced by "Action for Social Change" which conveyed the notion that change was of equal importance in the First as in the Third World. The method of Conscientization, conceived by the Brazilian Paulo Freire, was a subject of study and experimentation in Grail circles and won much acclaim.

WOMEN AND WORK: There had been a time in the past when the Grail was almost the only international Catholic movement consistently studying and working to develop a concept of the role of woman in society and Church. In recent years, however, this concern had been rather in the background, and not much coherent thought, expression or action had been going on.

In the wider world, women's search for genuine self-expression had become one of the main currents of this time. In the Grail, during the period after the Aggiornamento, national groups began to link up with the trend, according to their situations, and some feed-back reached the inter-

national. In this context International Vice-President Maria de Lourdes Pintasilgo, and Mrs. C. Halkes from the Dutch Ecumenical University Group, organised a meeting of thirty women scholars and writers from nine countries which took place at the Tiltenberg in September 1969.

EDUCATION: Education, formation, training had always been a strong feature of the Grail's programmes from its earliest beginnings. Indeed it sometimes had been criticized by other groups for the stress laid and the time spent on it. In all periods and in each country or region there were Grail centres especially designated to provide periods of formation. While supporting and encouraging such Grail programmes everywhere the International Presidency and Board made a strong effort to establish the Tiltenberg in The Netherlands again as an international centre with an international staff. The 'new Tilt' was launched with an international programme of reflection during Holy Week 1968, followed by an international summer with four different programmes: a resourcement period for an international Nucleus group, a gathering of the European Division of Antioch Education Abroad which fostered exchange programmes for students, a Meet the Church in Holland programme, and an international study meeting for educators on The Bible and the Adolescent.

This series of programmes - all of them deepening experiences for those who took part - was typical of what was to follow. Gradually, with the help of the International Presidency, the Tiltenberg developed again into an alive multi-purpose centre of encounter and reflection, geared to the support of groups in search of cultural-spiritual values.

In the same context of Education, a Grail Bulletin was published in this period dealing with the topic. There was also a plan to make a compilation of texts on different aspects of the Grail to be used as a 'Handbook for programmes of education in the Grail.' Regrettably this initiative was not realized. Another way was devised, however, to help along education programmes in the different countries: Grail members with specific competencies went for short periods to parts of the world where the Grail was rooted in order to help the teams there in evaluation, Grail formation and programmes of wider education.

GRAIL PUBLICATIONS

In view of the variety of interests and levels of commitment among the members there was a need also for a variety of written communications.

In this period four different publications were sent out from Paris:

Communications, Bulletins, Grail Review, Reflections.

The first one, Communications was a vehicle for telling the story of the happenings to all Grail participants. It appeared once a month and had a special appeal through its drawings and poetic insertions. Three of the issues appeared in French as well as in English, and one issue was written completely by the under twenty fives in the Grail.

Bulletins were more specialized publications, dealing with certain areas of action and sent to all people involved in the same field. After five issues, dealing with Ecumenism, International Collaboration, Education, and Development (two issues) the Bulletins were discontinued. This was partly because there was not sufficient response to the request for comments, partly because another type of publication was needed to prepare for the next International Assembly.

The well known Grail Review was now in its fifteenth year; it had known a period in which it appeared once, sometimes twice a year (1954-1957); there was one year (1957-58), when Mary Louise Tully, the able editor at that time, brought out an issue every month. Later it became a quarterly under the equally able editorship of Eleanor Walker+.

The Grail Review had changed its format from time to time, according to its readership. During the first years it went only to Nucleus members, then later to members and participants of the Movement in general, and later still to a broader public. Because several other periodicals had emerged for use among Grail members, it was decided that from 1969 onwards the Grail Review would be written mainly to keep friends and contacts informed about the life and work of the Grail and that it would appear annually.

Lastly in this period there was a monthly publication especially for members of the Nucleus, aptly called Reflections. It came from the International Presidency in collaboration with the Nucleus Council.

THE PRESIDENCY: JOURNEY AND CHANGES

Personal contact had always been seen as an extremely important element in the building of unity among the widely spread membership. Eileen Schaeffler followed in the footsteps of the three International Presidents before her in visiting the Grail in different parts of the world, thus bringing about more understanding and developing insights into the needs. In one journey (December 1967 - March 1968) Eileen visited the Grail centres and teams in West Africa, Brazil, Mexico and the U.S.A.; in another one (September 1969 - February 1970) she shared the circumstances of the teams in India, Indonesia, Australia and Japan.

In 1969 the term of office of the International Vice-President, Maria de Lourdes Pintasilgo, came to an end. As had been sensed earlier, there were doubts as to the continuation of this office. The international government of the Grail was seen as having its focus now in the International Board in collaboration with the International President, and it was decided after correspondence with the membership, not to continue the International Vice-Presidency.

Maria de Lourdes was then appointed by Eileen Schaeffler as a member of the International Nucleus Council.

Eileen carried on as International President with the International Board and the International Nucleus Council till 1971.

LAUNCHING OF A NEW INTERNATIONAL GENERAL ASSEMBLY AS A PROCESS

The four years envisaged by the I.G.A. of 1967 for the application of the decisions and recommendations were nearing an end. The time was coming to launch the next I.G.A. to be held in 1971, at Grailville, U.S.A. Some original ideas came up for this event.

One was to listen particularly to the younger members of the Grail, inviting their ideas and accepting these as fully as possible. A simple research was done by the International Presidency among groups of young people. It seems typical that out of this research came as theme for the I.G.A. of 1971 the call 'To live radically.' This was explained in terms of going to the roots of one's life commitment, what one lives on.

It proved to be a challenging theme, made even more challenging by the way it was worked out, for which a second original idea emerged. The team which was formed to prepare the I.G.A. was seeking for a form different from the usual sort of meeting and came up with the suggestion to see this I.G.A. as a PROCESS; this would involve all members in a series of small meetings at all sorts of levels and in as many different places as possible. Members were to reflect and interact and thus grow in awareness of the roots of their Grail commitment. The culmination would be the international meeting of chosen delegates at Grailville, after which the process would gradually wind down, to find its fruitfulness in the daily life of all participants in the next four years.

I.G.A. PROCESS

It is possible to see the whole process mirrored in the three I.G.A. Bulletins published by the Presidency and the I.G.A. Team. In the first Bulletin the process was launched. The theme 'To live radically' was put before the membership with the invitation to participate by reflecting together and exchanging among one another on this theme. All were asked to send in their reactions and thoughts for wider exchange.

In I.G.A. Bulletin two, four months later, these reactions were published in their entirety. They came from national groups in thirteen countries and one international group, and gave a colourful variety of questions and answers of thoughts about the past, comparisons, and constructive new ideas for the future.

Three convictions seemed to underlie the diversity of views expressed by the groups. They touched the very roots of Grail life. The I.G.A. team excerpted them and came to the following key words: common vision and common mission; corporate efforts and communal responsibility; the Christian message as core-inspiration of life.

In the third Bulletin, appearing three months later, reports of the reflections on these key-values were published. They came from Australia, Japan, Mexico, South Africa, Tanzania and U.S.A., and from regional/continental Grail meetings which had been held in Madrid and Mülheim for Europe, in Kampala for East Africa and in Belo Horizonte for Latin America. Almost unanimously they recognized these values as basic, 'radical,' although there were differences in the form of presentation and the terminology used in the different groups.

In this Bulletin there was also an announcement regarding the final meeting at Grailville: representatives should be elected for this meeting, from among all participants. This brought up once more the often-recurring question:

WHO CAN BE CALLED A GRAIL PARTICIPANT?

It was thought that it could not be left to the different countries to decide the norms according to their own lights, as had been the custom so far, but that some general criteria should be given by the International President and Board. Thus the 1960s ended with the statement that at this moment of the development of the Grail, a participant is:

- a woman who - has the vision of the Grail, as expressed in the Guidelines and International Structures,
- is co-operating on the basis of this vision in something that has been set as an immediate goal by the Grail group she is associated with,
 - is in some way part of the life of a Grail community of persons (not merely someone whose only interest is doing a particular job), and
 - is concerned with communicating the vision and mission to others.

The acceptance of this statement by all the groups and countries was another step forward in the shaping of the international identity of the Grail.

For more details about the period 1967-1971 see the Grail Publications mentioned in this chapter: Communications, Bulletins, Grail Review and Reflections.

CHAPTER X 1971-1979

LEARNING TO BE INTERNATIONAL

THE DECADE OF THE 1970s

Fifty years had passed since that small group of women in The Netherlands looked out over the world with hope and idealism. Half a century of commitment to a great cause lay behind and a new generation had come forward. Would they have the same hope, the same idealism?

The problems persisted - problems of war, of nuclear weapons, of racial conflict, of environmental pollution. They seemed to become worse and a certain scepticism set in. Not in every respect, however, and not so strongly in the first half of the decade. The women's cry for liberation grew louder still, a new International World Order was devised, the oil crisis brought a new challenge for collaboration, the North-South dialogue started - and there was still a sincere belief that justice was possible. The intensification of religious search in the world combined, especially among the young with an attempt to create alternative life-styles. These years saw the spreading of ecological movements into the political sphere, and - again especially among the young - of new psychic cults. A trend towards the exploration of inner processes seemed to take hold of young

people, so that this period began to be called the time of the "me-culture," a culture of narcissism, drawing young people away from the challenges of the world towards a focussing on the self.

It was also the period in which pluralism became a definitely accepted phenomenon. The monolithic structures of society and Church, of ethics and culture, of attitudes and thought systems, had finally come to an end. Wide ranges of beliefs, opinions, life-styles, priorities, values, presented themselves and were recognized.

PLURIFORMITY IN THE GRAIL

The Grail certainly had its share of this growing pluriformity. In fact, there had always been a certain diversity in the Movement. Looking at the different countries and cultures in which Grail members were at work, one did not find the composition of currents everywhere the same, or the strength of the tendencies equally strong. Factors of culture and of historical events often brought tremendous dissimilarities. In each country and culture the groups had to cope with the difficulties and challenges of their own area. This had seldom been questioned by the others.

For a long time the members had been satisfied that the International President and a small group of leaders knew the background of what was happening on the international Grail scene and it did not trouble them if they did not understand everything.

In the '70s, however, the need was felt among the general membership not only to know what the Grail was doing in different parts of the world, but also the why. It was a result of the development in lateral relations, the greater frequency of international meetings and the practice of shared responsibility. A sign of growth, too, in the original direction. From the beginning the hope for the Grail had been to become a truly international movement based on worldwide interaction. It had never been meant as a kind of federation with each national entity having its own autonomy. Even if much effort had gone into the shaping of local life and national structures, the ideal had remained: to have an intertwining between the different strands in the movement, making for influence in the world; to know and support each other across the boundaries; to combine talents, efforts, insights, charisms, opportunities in a common cause. Now more ideas were coming alive. The tendency towards international contact re-inforced the growth in national identity. One can say that in this period the Grail was able to grow into a stronger internationality because of the fact that in several of the national entities a certain maturity had been reached.

GROWTH ON NATIONAL BASES

This maturing process under the Presidency of Simone Tagher was especially remarkable in Uganda, Tanzania and Nigeria. Throughout the 70s leadership structures and training programmes were developed in individual countries. A Pan-African meeting gathered members from South Africa, Ghana, Tanzania, Uganda and Egypt in Nigeria in 1973. Indigenous Grail groups also started to develop among women in four areas of Kenya.



Tanzania, Kisekibaha.

Julieta Msofe, Maria Goretti Semvua, Ediltruda Msofe

Official recognition was accorded to the group in the Philippines in October 1975. Ten women, mostly teachers and clerical works of Maryknoll College, made a group commitment to work for Grail development in the Philippines. In Mexico Marie Therese McDermitt brought together some younger women. Gradually they wanted to go a step further. When one of these new Mexican Grail participants married and moved to Costa Rica, she interested a group of women in the Grail.*

It must be added that in some cases one is inclined to think of the Japanese proverb, "Seven times down, eight times up!" Sometimes the rhythm went the other way. The official Grail teams had to withdraw from Indonesia, Ghana, Singapore, as earlier from Hong Kong, though some promising links remained. In Japan and Surinam, however, the Grail presence was definitely discontinued in this period.

GROWTH IN INTERNATIONALITY

The Grail experienced a great learning process during the '70s to come to a genuine internationality. The main moments of this learning were the three International General Assemblies (I.G.A.'s) in 1971, 1974 and 1979. A look at each of these I.G.A.'s, can give an insight into the developments in this period. It also throws a light on the struggles the movement went through.

*The development of the Grail in these countries is described in separate volume.

THE I.G.A. OF 1971

As already mentioned, this I.G.A. had been launched as a process of reflection and evaluation in which members in all Grail countries took part. From the 6th to the 15th of August, 1971, fifty representatives from eighteen different countries met at Grailville. This time the African continent was represented by African women. Elisabeth Reid working at that time in India, and Rachel Donders, engaged in Grail work in Japan, tried to bring a whiff of the Asian atmosphere into the gathering.

The International Board presented a report on their activities and concerns, the representatives of the countries reported on the state of the Grail in their particular areas, and smaller workshops delved more deeply into essential traits and needs.

First of all there was the felt need to refocus the Grail community in the search for God, in Christ, as its deepest ongoing motivation.

A statement on this "Religious Search," composed in one of the Workshops, spoke of the spiritual dimension which this search gave to all that Grail members undertook for the 'transformation of society,' of the crisis undergone individually as well as communally, and of the staying together depending on hope as a gift; of the need for individuals and groups to go continually through the process of death and resurrection, bringing about reconciliation with God and each other, celebrating this in the Eucharist and in the hearing of the Word.

It also spoke of the Grail community as part of the Church in her desire to be renewed in the Spirit, and of the importance to emphasize expressions of religious experience, of worship and ritual, valuing both classic forms coming from the great religious traditions and other expressions in tune with contemporary sensitivities.

A need to come to a common strategy in facing the great problems of injustice and oppression in so many situations in the world was also felt. A work group defined the "Transforming Influence" of the Grail in terms of creating something new from within. A new view of oneself and of one's own situation was needed which would lead to a new view of changing oneself and one's situation. This was to be brought about through an awakening of consciousness, involving reflection and action in each situation. The method of conscientization would be studied in depth. Through a network of communications and relationships within the Grail and with others the Grail might be able to become a home of values where people experienced communality and an expression of their hopes.

A number of other concerns emerged: the promotion of inter-relatedness among teams within and across geographical areas, participation of non-Christian women in the Grail, diversity of Grail expressions and the need for unity, education into the Grail for the growing number of young people.

There were areas where opinions were divided or where vagueness seem to hang over the discussions and questions which seemed to elude answers. One such question was whether the Process of the I.G.A. should end or continue; another was what was the role of the International Board since it did not seem to have enough roots in the daily life of the Grail.

The search went on, and finally there emerged a "Basis of Operation of the International Grail for the period 1971-1973." This was a good solution to the problems: the process would continue for two years (later this was extended to three) in which the main concerns expressed in the Meeting would be worked out, while at the same time the Movement would experiment with new ways of operation and government. After two years an evaluation would take place.

THE PRESIDENCY AND ASSISTING BODIES

With the 1971 I.G.A. meeting Eileen Schaeffler's term of office as International President ended. Procedures for a new election had already started, but the nominees had not yet decided whether they could make themselves available as candidates. More time was needed, and the election procedure continued through correspondence. The main difficulty was that most of the candidates were involved in professional work in their own countries or in the international field, which they could not interrupt without serious harm for the work itself and for their continued engagement in it. An impasse threatened. But finally in November 1971 Eileen could announce with great joy that Simone Tagher had responded to the call to serve the Grail as International President. The Grail had an International President again! Simone decided to work from her home base in Cairo. The establishment of the International Secretariat in Egypt became an additional element in the growth of the international character of the Grail. The centre in Paris, which for so many years had been the International Grail Secretariat, continued to be used for some time by the French Grail team, but was finally sold in 1975.

At the I.G.A. meeting it had been felt that a special service was needed to stimulate the ongoing process. A new body was formed, called the INTERNATIONAL TEAM. The three members would meet every six months with the International President, it had no executive function. It had the task of accompanying and co-ordinating action and fostering new initiatives. It was responsible for the production and distribution of the Bulletins, for evaluation of the two-year period, for initiating international inquiries on such topics as solidarity and leadership, and later for preparing with the President the various meetings of the International Council which was formed in 1974.

The first team, chosen at the 1971 I.G.A. meeting, consisted of Joan Dilworth (Scottish), Peg Siegmund (U.S.A.) and Simone Tagher, who was replaced a few months later by Teresa S. Clara Gomes (Portuguese). Others who served on this team up till 1978 were Marita Estor (German), Irmengard Schönhuber+ (German), Guida Santos (Portuguese), Ann Moore (South African) and Mary Boyd (Canadian).

At the same I.G.A. meeting the idea of RESOURCE PERSONS emerged. Members with particular competence in one or other field could be invited to stay for a certain time with a Grail team or national entity to share knowledge, insights and skills. Audrey Sorrento (U.S.A.) was invited as resource person to South Africa and Uganda, Jane Namugenyi (Baganda) to Lesotho, Teresa S. Clara Gomes to Italy, Mexico and Brasil, Dorothy Rasenberger and Carol Webb (both U.S.A.) to the Philippines, Theresinha Tavares (Portuguese) to Costa Rica and Brasil, Mary Gindhart (U.S.A.) to Australia.

Another type of service created on the same occasion was that of ad hoc FACILITATORS, persons with the specific task of enabling the programming and interaction in the numerous international or regional events.

INTERNATIONALITY AT THE GRASSROOTS LEVEL

In the 1971 I.G.A. meeting spontaneously a new way was opened to promote internationality in action at the grassroots level. The starting point for this was the 'affinity' which a team or person had through her work or involvements, and which could bring her in contact with others who had similar concerns in different parts of the world. The fields of social change, medical work, catechetics, education, ecumenism were affinity areas, in which people of different cultures could exchange insights and collaborate across geographic boundaries. Affinity areas could also be based on a similarity in circumstances in which people were at work, such as rural areas, big cities, universities, Church structures. Although a long list of such areas was drawn up and people reacted enthusiastically, only a few groups reached the stage of actual effective existence. However, in spite of that, the idea was sown; it lingered on and was picked up at a later stage.

MEETINGS

One might ask if there had ever been - or would ever be - a period of so many diverse meetings as the two or three years which followed the 1971 I.G.A. Listed according to their dates, with a simple mentioning of places, title and participation, they indicate the keen desire among the Grail women to meet face to face and to grow in international bonding, with each other and with new friends.

- 1972, August: Exchange in Cairo 8 Egyptian, 10 European, and 1 U.S.A. young women.
- June/August: An 8 week Orientation Meeting between U.S.A. and Mexican women, held in San Jose, California.
- August: Programme "International Summer," in camping style, in Tremôa, Portugal, with more than one hundred participants from Europe, Africa and Asia.
- 1973, January: A two-week South Pacific Summer School in Fiji, organised by the Grail in Australia for 60 persons coming from Western Samoa, Papua New Guinea, Fiji, India, U.S.A., New Zealand and Australia. This was to become a biennial event.
- April: Pan African Grail Meeting, in Ibadan, Nigeria, with 35 participants from Egypt, Ghana, Nigeria, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda.
- July: Group for Prayer and Reflection, in Paris, France, with 10 participants from Europe, Japan and U.S.A.
- July/August: International Meeting of Young Grail People in New Delhi, India with 13 young women from India, 18 from Europe and U.S.A. for two weeks.

- August: Meeting of "Think Group on the Nucleus" in the Tiltenberg, The Netherlands, with 12 members from Brasil, Egypt, Holland, Germany, South Africa, Uganda and U.S.A.
- August: Meeting of "Think Group on Professionals and Social Change" at Grailville, U.S.A., with 14 members from Portugal, Germany, Mexico, France, Philippines, Canada and U.S.A.
- September: Meeting of "Think Group on Conscientization" in Portugal, with 18 members from Portugal, Canada, France, Germany, Brasil, Mexico, U.S.A. and Italy.
- December: Pan American Regional Meeting in Mexico City, with 19 participants from Mexico, Peru, Brasil, Surinam, U.S.A., Canada, Philippines.

1974, December 1973 - January 1974:

Young Africans Meeting for one month in Rome, Italy, with 8 participants from East Africa and one from South Africa.

CEMA Programme (Cultural Exchange Meetings on Africa) in U.S.A., with 12 African women spending five months in U.S.A. meeting Grail teams and others.

EVALUATION AT THE END OF EXPERIMENTAL PERIOD

In order to assess how the Basis of Operation of 1971 had worked in practice, Simone Tagher as International President held a consultation among the Grail groups in the different countries and then called together a meeting of twelve persons who were carrying national or international responsibility. This Meeting in Mülheim took place in October 1973. From their evaluation, pluriformity emerged as an important characteristic of the Grail; this was seen as a richness, but the need for constant reflection on the common religious and social basis was also discerned. Although it was found that the structures and governmental bodies of the experimental period had worked well - and therefore it was suggested that they continue - there was a call for a new body of persons who would bring together the wealth of cultural diversity and would clarify and articulate vision. This led to the proposal of forming an INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL, in which representatives of countries, cultures and Grail aspects would meet with the International President on a regular basis, for the sake of unity of vision and action, for ongoing evaluation and for policy-making. The substance for this policy making had to come, as before, from the International General Assemblies, to be held every three years.

THE MOBILE INTERNATIONAL GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF 1974

It was time then to turn the attention to the next I.G.A. Significantly, and indicating the desire among the members to keep contact with each other in depth, most countries did not want another big I.G.A. meeting with representatives from all over. A plan was devised to organize four smaller international meetings, on four basic issues, in four different countries. In other words, the focus of the I.G.A. moved from issue to issue, from country to country, from group to group. It became known as "the Mobile Assembly."

The issues which had been the study topics of some of the Think Groups were largely those formulated in the I.G.A. of 1971:

Search for God as the core of all action, at the very heart of life;

Work Involvement, looking more deeply at the meaning of work and professional commitment in the light of the Grail vision;

Conscientization, with the special contribution of Latin America in this issue, dealing with oppression and injustice in all respects;

Growing together as Grail, especially geared to young people, to discover the common and diverse cultural elements among them.

Small planning teams were formed to prepare each of these issue meetings, which took place as follows:

Mobile I.G.A. 1974, July: Issue Meeting on GROWING TOGETHER AS GRAIL held in Tanzania, Kisekibaha, for 3 weeks. 25 participants from East and West Africa and 2 from U.S.A.

August: Issue Meeting on WORK INVOLVEMENT held in The Netherlands, the Tiltenberg, 39 participants from 12 countries.

August: Issue Meeting on CONSCIENTIZATION held in Canada, Toronto, 29 participants from 12 countries.

August: Issue Meeting on RELIGIOUS SEARCH held in U.S.A. Grailville, 16 participants from 9 countries

In the first meeting of the newly-formed International Council, in December 1974 at the Tiltenberg, The Netherlands, the findings and reports of these four Mobile International General Assembly Meetings were summed up and a new BASIS OF OPERATION was formulated, to be operative till the next I.G.A.

GATHERINGS OF THE NUCLEUS MEMBERS

Nucleus concerns were dealt with in the experimental period by an International Nucleus Council of four members including the International President; in the new phase, after the I.G.A. of 1974, this Council was replaced by a Nucleus Team, consisting of the International President and two members, appointed by her after nomination by the Nucleus. This three-some, Simone Tagher, Rachel Donders and Teresa Santa Clara Gomes, carried responsibility till 1978. In that period it took the initiative of bringing together Nucleus members from around the world for the purpose of deepening and strengthening the spirit, especially the elements of freedom, continuity, unity which the Nucleus as such was supposed to bring into the whole Grail.

Many Nucleus members responded to the invitation to gather together, and, as it was impossible to include them all in one meeting, there were two sections of the International Nucleus Gathering during 1976, one in Portugal, Cortegaca, 19th-28th July, with 61 participants working in 22 countries, and one in U.S.A., Grailville, 19th-29th December, with 51 participants working in 11 countries.

Through its content and form the International Nucleus Gathering was an inspiration for the participants and an affirmation of the spiritual aspect of their role in the Grail. However, time and again in these years the problem arose of how to define the place of the Nucleus as a whole, or the role of Nucleus members individually, in the structures of the Grail. It was no longer the leadership-cadre of the fifties and earlier part of the sixties; this had already been changed in 1967. It was no longer the identifiable core group in all countries, because members of other walks of life were carrying equal responsibility for the growth and spirit of the whole. Still some of the historic traits were carried over in the thinking of some members and this caused a certain malaise. The whole question was related to the growth in shared responsibility, different expectations of leadership, international solidarity and the locus of authority. For the time being this problem was not solved and unease about the role of the Nucleus remained.

PREPARATIONS FOR THE NEXT I.G.A.

In 1975 Simone Tagher was re-elected as International President for 3 years, and in 1978, at an International Council Meeting held in January in Rome, she was asked to continue for a further 18 months, until the International General Assembly of 1979. With all the learning to be international proceeding on all levels and the new confrontation with the world and its problems, it was not a time of quiet development. It was a period of struggle and search to come to a greater clarity on the way the Grail should operate. Simone's travels to the different countries and especially her visits to Africa, were a great help in keeping the unity and moving into a new future. Two teams were formed to focus the different trends and needs. One team was to prepare the next I.G.A. where the growth of these years would have to be articulated and confirmed. Gerda Kaufman (Germany), Audrey Sorrento (U.S.A.) and Teresa Santa Clara Gomes (Portugal) were elected by the International Council (1978). The other team had to turn its attention to leadership and government, structures for strategy and policy making, and to various groupings in the Grail. This Structure Work Group composed of Alison Healey (Australia) and Mary Kane (U.S.A.) consulted extensively with the membership and formulated a proposal for new structures, which was discussed at the I.G.A. of 1979.

The I.G.A. Team carried out a census of the whole membership. Each person in the Grail was asked to fill in a Census card with information about herself; the three main points dealt with how and where she first met the Grail, her formation in it, and which interests, concerns, issues, were alive for her.

The analysis of the answers of 430 persons who responded to the Census showed the interesting fact that there were 11 persons who had met the Grail (or rather: the Women of Nazareth) in the 1920s, 42 members had joined in the 1930s, 62 members in the 1940s, 123 in the 1950s, 93 in the 1960s, and 99 in the 1970s.

Their major concerns and issues were classified by the I.G.A. Team in Religious Search, Christian Life, Social Change, Human Rights, Social Organisation, Humanisation and Personal Growth, the question of Women, Family and Age Groups, and a number of internal Grail concerns.

The idea of 'affinity areas,' already launched tentatively at the I.G.A. of 1971 was thus picked up again and became more defined. All Grail participants were informed of the results in a Census Feedback Communication, and were asked to get in touch, group to group, person to person, on the basis of similar concerns and involvements which they discovered in the Feedback. The emerging issues became the main material for discussion during the I.G.A. of 1979.

COMMUNICATIONS

If towards the end of the 1970s a real growth in internationality could be noticed, this was due not only to the learning process in the many meetings, but also to the regular written communications which went out. A difficulty in this respect was the language. From the 1950s onwards English had been used as the common language. This occasionally caused discontent for in several countries much time and energy had to be given to translating the main communications. However, the common language also brought unity. On the international level the main vehicle for communication was the "Bulletin of the International Grail Movement," appearing every six months. It gave information on major issues and themes, news from countries, advance notice and reports of various international meetings, events or inquiries. Twenty such Bulletins were issued in the period up till 1978.

At the same time, exchange of national newsletters was much encouraged. The think groups, issue meetings and regional gatherings produced documentation which was distributed internationally. In 1971 each country was asked to name a Communications Person for receiving and distributing all this information nationally. This exchange developed international knowledge and understanding.

For the Nucleus a communication was sent out every two months; it was called "Focus" and appeared till 1977.

THE INTERNATIONAL GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF 1979

The third I.G.A. of this decade was held in Portugal, Figueira da Foz, from 22nd July - 6th August. "The best of the I.G.A.'s so far!", says a report of this meeting. It was certainly the biggest, with its 91 participants from 20 countries, and the longest, too, lasting as it did 16 days.

More important: it was an Assembly in which maturity and balance were clearly demonstrated. In contrast to earlier Assemblies in which First World women - working in their own or in Third World Countries - were in the majority, this Assembly verified the belief that indigenization of the Grail had become a reality. The multi-cultural dimension of the Grail had certainly become one of its greatest values and characteristics.

From the Census, the I.G.A. Team had distinguished three main issues, which were discussed in Workshops at this I.G.A. These were:

Women as Builders of New Societies

Living Faith in a World to be Redeemed

Joined Action for Liberation, leading to a New World Order.

A fourth Workshop was geared to studying the evolving vision of the Grail and how to nurture this vision.

INTERNATIONAL NETWORKS ENRICHING THE NATIONAL ORGANISATION

A significant result of the Meeting was the establishment of four International Networks, to be operative in the Grail throughout the world, on the issues mentioned above. By this a certain breakthrough was reached: it meant that the action of Grail members in these areas was now officially supported and affirmed on the international level. The Networks were recognized in the new Structure Document.

The establishment of the four International Networks, each with its own facilitators appointed for the period till the next I.G.A., did not supersede in any way the national organisation and action of the Grail, nor hinder emerging regional groups. These continued as before and were enriched by the input of the members bonded together in a new way through the Network relationships crisscrossing the world.

NEW ELEMENTS IN THE STRUCTURES

Besides the work on the four issues, the I.G.A. also dealt with the proposal for new Structures of the International Grail, drawn up by the Structure Work Group.

A very important element in this proposal was that in the place of one International President there should be formed a Presidency Team consisting of three members, one of whom would be a Nucleus member especially concerned with Nucleus matters.

Another new element was a conscious shift in the process of decision-making. The policy-making would rest from now on with the Grail community as such, i.e., the International General Assembly, while the International Council was to be an implementing body, taking forward the decisions made by the I.G.A. The International Presidency Team was to have a more coordinating or catalyzing function.

Other new elements were: the establishment of the Networks, as already mentioned, their function and expansion, and the enlargement of the International Council by delegates from the Networks.

After studying the proposals under the guidance of the Structure Work Group, the I.G.A. delegates in plenary session, affirmed this Document.

They also affirmed a document setting out the Vision of the Grail, proposals for action in the Networks, and various recommendations of matters to be implemented in the next four years.

ALIVE CONCEPTS

The following paragraphs from the Structure Document and Vision Statement show the concepts alive at this moment of the ongoing history of the Grail:

As the Grail has developed through several generations and in different parts of the world, it has gathered into itself a rich experience of different cultures, environments, efforts and involvements, life orientations and situations of persons and groups.

Responsive to the Spirit
in the world,
in the Church,
and in itself,
the Grail has sought and continues to seek
all that promotes and strengthens
both its unity and its variety.

The Grail is an international movement of women
rooted in Christian faith.

Conscious of our identity
and aware of our potential,
we feel urged by the Spirit
and challenged by the life of Christ
and the radical call of the Gospel
to participate
in the transformation of the world.

In its life and work
the Grail strives for the integration
of living faith,
full potential of women,
work for transformation,
to build a universal society
of justice, peace and love.

And so, some sixty years after that first small band of young women began
sowing the seed, a movement of hundreds looks out over the world of the
eighties, in hope.

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