

The Grail in Portugal + 30 years of history

1. *They fly and have roots in a world in transition*

The Grail in Portugal celebrated its Jubilee Year in 2008. During that year several regional celebrations were organized by Grail groups in different places of the country and in October 2008 we gathered in Fátima during a three days program with the presence of Grail women from other countries and continents. *She flies and has roots* was the theme of the gathering. *Roots of the future* was the title of a “play” we presented on the stage during the opening session, written by Isabel Allegro.

How did we “fly” in this country during the last thirty years of our Grail history, shortly described on these pages? On which ways and in which dimensions have we been faithful to our roots, responding to Father van Ginneken’s invitation: *to live in the elbow of time?*

With the quality of our projects, the steady involvement in women’s and societal issues and the theological and spiritual search, we have tried to be coherent with the vision and mission of the Grail. We were involved in many projects and programs with women and young people on the themes of conciliation between professional and private life, transformation of unjust structures, a culture of care, among others. Caring for the future and commitment to spiritual search, ethics and aesthetics have been considered as a fundamental inspiration for our daily life. These involvements in the late years have been gradually more connected with other movements and platforms in Portugal and abroad, investing in being represented in different forums, creating synergies and coordinating efforts both on a national and transnational level. We also have been involved in cooperation with PALOP (Countries of Portuguese language).

Did we continue to make significant contributions to the transformation of the Portuguese society? Aware that there is not just “one way”, we feel questioned by the complex and fragmented world we live in. The insecurity at all levels, the lack of peace, terrorism and the unpredictability of everything challenge us to be even more rooted in both past and future, open to the present, with frugality in styles of living and compassionate with each other. We

usually say that we need to be “going and coming in a connected world”. Flying and being rooted. Praying, celebrating, reflecting and exploring our common spirituality are at the core of our collective being. Standing in the Christian Tradition and Spirituality and open to other spiritual searches we have tried to be committed to a world in transition, which needs us to be each time more inclusive.

2. Places with a soul

The Grail Center in Golegã

In the beginning there was a dream. To have a space of our own, where all of us would be recognized in the outer visibility, in the spirit living there, in the life woven in different ways, this was a collective desire for a long time.

And so in 1983 the Grail Centre in Golegã is born. A HOUSE surrounded by a piece of LAND. The very first task was to make the house livable and to sow and plant in the land what would become our food. The residential team of four persons, later joined by Audrey Schömer as well as other Grail participants, gave form to this beginning.

We wished this house to be a place where meeting, pause, reflection, creativity had a particular space. So it did happen through the years, a constant coming and going of people and many different events. Along with a small residential team, over the years, there have been many people who have lived here for a longer or a shorter time, as Rachel Donders and Ankie Monnik who several times spent here the three months of summer.

The international dimension that is part of us was present from the beginning, in hosting international meetings, as exemplified, in our first summer in 1984, a week on "Experience of trusting" with Carolyn Gratton; the International Councils held here three times; a European meeting and many others. Numerous national meetings for deepening and growing in the Grail, national assemblies, working groups following the guidelines of international meetings; residential programs for girls; summer camps for teenagers, projects with young people, study weeks, e.g. the program "Women, Theology and Mysticism" (from 2010 until 2014), as well as sporadic and occasional meetings of reflection and debate of ideas had here taken place.

Faith as a fundamental dimension of life had, in each year, its highest expression in the celebration of Easter. Participants of the Grail and friends came to live the Paschal Triduum.

Other times of the liturgical year - Pentecost, Advent, and Lent - were also opportunity to Bible meetings and celebrations.

In 2008 we celebrated the 25th anniversary of this Grail Centre. We invited people who had participated in some event or had just passed here. Many could not come, but the hundred who were here celebrated in joy the memories of the time spent here, in this community of affection that the Grail is.

In 2012 we started a new “community development program” co-financed by the Grail International Solidarity Fund, entitled *Circles and Paths of Creative and Reciprocal Literacy*. This program aims at promoting critical and creative participation of young people and adults in the public space of Golegã and surrounding municipalities.

Terraço

A space for meeting, searching and conviviality

A network of ideas, dreams, affections

A space for reflection, convergence, intervention

A call to Celebrating Life, to Transcendence, to the Spirit

The lines above describe what is Terraço, the Grail Centre in Lisbon, created in 1983 by Teresa Santa Clara. The idea was to develop a cultural center, a meeting point, a contemplative site, a rooftop overlooking the city of Lisbon. A space of Beauty and Aesthetics. We could describe Terraço's activity in different phases:

- a beginning phase with cultural activities, round-table meals for people to meet, etc., led by Teresa Santa Clara;
- a second phase with weekly cultural meetings, led by Isabel Allegro;
- a third phase oriented towards European funded nonformal educational projects, mainly with young people and women led by Guida Amélia Santos: various projects around leadership and women, women and health issues, immigrant women, violence in relationships among young people, *Time Bank* (interchange of skills to support individual needs), interactive society, education for planetary citizenship, etc. *Training for Transformation* has been used for several activities. *Girl Effect* was led by Joana Fialho and now by Inês Prata.
- a final and present phase that, maintaining the projects - led now by a team coordinated by Eliana Madeira - also develops monthly in-depth meetings called

Terraço-em-Diálogo (Terraço-in-Dialogue) about key themes in terms of social, political, spiritual and theological issues. The responsibility for *Terraço-em-Diálogo*, coordinated by Sónia Monteiro, was assumed by the Grail 'belonging' group (grupo de pertença) in Lisbon. Weekly prayers gather a group of Grail and non-Grail members - *H(Alto)*. And *Adagio*, a spirituality group with women in their sixties and seventies, in the fringes of Catholic Church, every two weeks for four years now under the responsibility of Ticha Vasconcelos and Marijke de Koning. In the beginning of *Terraço* there was a residential team of young people living in the apartment next door which was now retaken by a group of young people interested in participating in the Grail.

Consistently the *Terraço* became a place for Spiritual Dynamism that roots people in today's societal challenges and draws them into commitment for a better quality of life and into "transforming the world". Therefore *Terraço* has become a reference point for many people in Lisbon who regularly attend our programs. The name *Terraço* was chosen by Teresa Santa Clara inspired by the beautiful poem of Fernando Pessoa:

Tudo o que sonho ou passo,
O que me falha ou finda,
É como que um terraço
Sobre outra coisa ainda.
Essa coisa é que é linda.

*(All I dream or do,
all I fail or end,
is like a balcony,
over still another thing.
That thing is the beautiful one.)*

Alto da Praia

In 1995 *Alto da Praia*, a house situated in Praia Grande, a beach resort near Sintra, with a view on the Atlantic Ocean, at a 40 km distance of Lisbon, was inaugurated as a new Grail Centre after the selling of the *Nascente* centre in the nearby village of Praia das Mações.

Between 1995 and 2001 the place received international Grail visitors, hosted several Grail meetings, the IGA 98, as well as activities of the Lien Network and was a place where Grail

and other people could take some days of rest or holidays. In 1998, during the IGA, we celebrated here the 40 years of existence of the Grail in Portugal.

In 2001 *Alto da Praia* became the necessary financial basis and property of the Foundation *Cuidar O Futuro* and a source of income through rents. Two Grail World Congresses took place, in 2001 and 2002, as well as in later years some activities of the Foundation programs and of the Grail. The place continued available for Grail participants.

3. Opening breaches/Changing life

The *Carnation Revolution* opened in 1974 a space to the new in Portugal, we wrote in 1983 in “a very unpretentious publication, *Mudar a Vida* (To Change Life)”. Did we manage to open breaches and change life? Mentioning the 65 themes of this every two months publication that started in 1978 and lasted until 1987, could give us an indicator of the references that constituted the theory of our praxis in that period of transition, as well as some of the projects and initiatives that permitted to create the unity of theory and action, needed for a good praxis as Paulo Freire stated. But on these pages there is no space to list all these items. Just to mention some in the period of 1983 – 1987: *Act locally, think globally; pedagogical experimentation with children in rural areas; parallel economy; religion and society; planetary questions; the urgency of peace; which morals today?; new models of social organization; limits of change, towards a vivid culture; ways of alternative life; ethics and anthropology; values and counter values*. Also the publications of *Terraço* could give us an indicator of the breaches and changes the themes refer to (see 7. Registering and disseminating information) and for those who read Portuguese: see <http://www.graal.org.pt/documentos.php>

On January 1 of 1986, another major change took place: Portugal formally joined the European Union. How did we move on in an each time more European ruled society? The European Union brought a lot of advantages also for NGO's like the Grail, in terms of financing part of our projects. The underlying negative dynamics of our gradually more individualistic, consumerist, competitive globalizing world however were slowly infiltrating our societies and the places we live in and work. The differences between for instance the contexts of the Golegã town in a time span of about 25 years are evident. Young people who participated in the *MODELO* project (1986 – 1989), a formation program with young women - and in the recent *ECO - Meeting the Other* project (2013 -2015), have completely different life worlds and views of who they are and would like to become.

In the ECO project we try to question the contemporaneous “fat ego” (Kunneman, 2005). This figure manifests itself each time more clearly since the nineties of the last century in a consumerist, ego-centered way, only demanding respect for its highly individual ideas and desires. It is an unfortunate amplification of the autonomous and free subject that we tried to support in our conscientization work in the seventies and eighties. In the fat ego limits of the modern ideals of freedom and autonomy become visible. The rapid expansion of this ego did forget moral references such as solidarity, respect and tolerance. Which breaches have to be opened (or “closed”?) now, in 2014?

The new technologies of information and communication constituted another factor of major change in the life of the Grail around the planet as well as in our local, regional and national contexts. How did we change? Did our praxis of action and reflection change? Did our theoretical references change? Did we work differently in our contexts of non-formal education, for instance? How did we work with young women? Did we become more international, a movement of women around the world, a “global community”? Which changes should we try to contribute to in the next ten years? Which changes to introduce in our ways of “running the movement”? Questions, questions, questions, trying to open new breaches. Constantly.

4. Creating contexts of non-formal education

Creating contexts has always been a much cheered concept in the Grail in Portugal. Since its beginnings in this country (1957) the Grail created contexts of learning, of deepening insights, of action, of community life, of prayer, Bible study, contemplation and celebration, probably as anywhere else in the Grail around the world.

In the more explicit educational contexts such as community development and cultural animation projects, training programs or workshops, the Grail situates itself in the field of non-formal education. Since the project *Human Promotion and Evangelization* in Portalegre in the middle sixties of the last century (and a few years later the introduction of literacy programs based on the philosophy and methodology of conscientization of Paulo Freire), many projects followed until nowadays. All meant to be contexts of learning and changing life, as the title of one of the Grail publications mentioned above, *Mudar a Vida*, stated.

The non-formal educational space, as it aims to raise awareness or to train adults and youngsters, is or should be inherently a space of speech that can lead to different ways of acting. How to promote literacy as an ongoing and continuous process of evolution of our

ability to speak and act? How to resist, as facilitators, to the temptation of “teaching” all the time and talking in monologues?

The task in the non-formal educational spaces is at the first place to promote conversation. We need to talk with each other in order to understand what is happening. The focus in this kind of process is more on human understanding than on the increase of theoretical and technical knowledge. The conversation is not so much a method but rather an experience in which people participate. The conversational learning processes that the Grail in Portugal nowadays uses in its educational contexts are less “method” than Paulo Freire’s *Conscientization Method*, which philosophy of education however continues to be an important reference.

During the almost sixty years of our history in Portugal our experience in working in non-formal educational contexts tells us that they don’t guarantee automatically that useful learning for nowadays world takes place. Learning today implies, on the first place, to develop the capacity of ‘improvisation’ and ‘tuning’, in order to face the time of uncertainty and complexity we live in. Errors and mistakes are part of this process of learning in a world in which we need to find a new balance in the social organization of our *polis*. In order to imbed our future in a common stream of life, we need to find a balance between the dynamics of the global economical and technological developments and our diverse cultural roots and practices. Inclusion of the ‘other’ and the ‘different’ is a major task and a central theme in our most recent non-formal educational projects. To read more about the projects (in Portuguese), see also: ‘Projetos em curso’ in: <http://www.graal.org.pt/>

5. Young women networking in Europe

What has been the meaning of LIEN, the European network of young professional women? That is very clearly described in *The Grail Entering the 21st century*”, as Ine van Emmerik wrote in a letter to the IGA of 2006: “LIEN has been an open, inviting place, a quest of young women re-examining, re-assessing, re-stating their personal and common sources of meaning and inspiration. The themes that have been addressed in LIEN are still important for young women today: empowerment of women, cultural exchange and societal change. “

LIEN (“LINK”) started in 1989 - the year of the fall of the Berlin Wall - through the contacts of Maria de Lourdes Pintasilgo and Kerstin Jacobsson with a few young women from different countries who realized how much they had in common. Other women joined and in the following years 250 women in 25 European countries were reached out. The initiatives were

supported from the beginning also by Teresa Santa Clara and in 1991 Marijke de Koning became part of the Grail staff coordinating the Network. Later Inês Neto joined the staff and in 2001 Ine van Emmerik.

To describe the activity of LIEN it makes sense to make visible the “threads and knots” that “wove” the web of the network and how we moved through its first 20 years of existence. Between 1989 and 2009 we “travelled together” on the following ways: Publication of the **LIEN Newsletter**: 23 issues between 1989 e 1997. **European Meetings**, with a duration of about a week in different countries: Portugal, Praia das Mações, 1991, 1993, 1994 and Praia Grande, 1995, 1997, 1998, 1999, Golegã, 2009; Switzerland, Fribourg, 1992 and 1993; Sweden, Uppsala 1994; Germany, Jena, 1997, with Gerda Kaufman in the staff; Croatia, Pasmán, 2005, Anđelka Rudic, a Lien participant from the very beginning, joined Ine van Emmerik in the preparation and the coordination of this event. **Regional Meetings**, in weekends or on Saturdays, with participants of different European countries: France, Paris, 1992; the Netherlands, Amsterdam, 1993, 1994 and Nijmegen, 1993 and 1994; Belgium, several meetings in Brussels. **National Meetings**: Sweden, several meetings with the presence of Maria de Lourdes Pintasilgo and Teresa Santa Clara. Portugal, Praia Grande, regular meetings during the weekends between 1997 and 2005 and one (final) meeting in Atadoa (2008). **Polish Itineraries**, one week travel through the country in 1993, meetings with Polish LIEN participants facilitated by Kerstin Jacobsson, Karin Beskow and Marijke de Koning, in Warsaw, Krakov and Wrocław. **Getting to know the Grail**, one week program in Sweden, Sigtuna in 1996, with LIEN women from Sweden, Portugal, Germany. The Grail staff included two other Grail members, Peg Linnehan (USA) and Fátima Grácio (Portugal). After this program the LIEN group in Sweden applied for Grail membership, which was recognized at the IGA of 1998. **Grail World Congresses I and II**, in 2001 and 2002 in Alto da Praia, Portugal, one week programs, led and organised by LIEN, with the participation of young Grail and non Grail women from all continents. After the first Grail World Congress, in which Robin Sclafani participated, the Brussels group started as a combination Grail-LIEN, with some coming through one and some through the other. The participants in this group were directed towards LIEN because they were younger, but it was always a joint identity.

Still to mention the publication of **Grail Reader 1** (1967 – 1993), edited in 2011 by Kerstin Jacobsson and Marijke de Koning and gathering the documents used in the *Getting to know the Grail* program of 1996 in Sweden and presented to the IGA 2011.

In 2010 a new team of young women took over the Lien Network, coordinated by Joana Fialho. LIEN continues in Europe and LIEN + (international) emerged at the IGA in 2011.

6. To Celebrate Faith and Life

When we think of words that can, in a way, define the Grail - search, quest, discovery, event - CELEBRATE is certainly one of them.

Celebrate LIFE as a free gift given to us and celebrate FAITH that is part of us and moves us is the place where we all recognize ourselves as belonging to this "tribe of the People of God" which is the Grail.

In our way of being in Church and of situating ourselves in the world, attentive to the signs of the times, Faith is intrinsically linked to Life without dichotomy, fully integrated. Enhance the liturgical year, deepening the meaning of symbols; seeking to make the language of faith actual was a constant, whether in the Grail Centers in Golegã and Lisbon or in other places where Grail teams exist. So we celebrated together the Easter *Triduum*, we had meetings for reflection / celebration of the feast of All Saints, and in Advent, Lent, Pentecost.

In what we call 'grupos de pertença (belonging groups)' (Grail participants gathered by geography), where prayer has a privileged place, we also had a number of initiatives, such as meetings on inter-religious dialogue; reflection / study from a book (as an example: *Creed* and *A theology for the 3rd Millennium* by Hans Küng; *Virtues for another possible world* of Leonardo Boff); Bible study groups; reflection meeting proposed by the spirituality and theology network; celebrations from the publication *Let us celebrate*.

At the local level many of us have developed several activities in parishes. At the national level we are part of a structure that brings together the various ecclesial movements.

Until 1987 we had the above mentioned publication *Mudar a Vida* (To Change Life) which was a space for reflection and information on social trends and movements of our time, simultaneously from the perspective of an authentic look of faith into the history which we lived. From those themes there were meetings in different cities across the country.

Nascente (East- where the sun rises) - the centre in Praia das Maçãs where Rachel Donders and Ankie Monik were living during their stay in Portugal – was a welcoming place for anyone who wanted a time to stop and getting to a spiritual source.

From 2010 until the present, the program *Women Theology and Mysticism* took place in Golegã. For a week these topics were deepened with input from experts in these areas (including the Bible). This program always had the participation of people from the international Grail, who contributed within the content of the topics covered.

Last but not the least, Golegã hosted the program *International Grail Nucleus Reflection Week* (26th October into November 3rd), a gathering of women from different countries willing to think and share about the Nucleus life-choice. Very rich in terms of content and of "spirit", the week culminated with the dedication of two Portuguese Grail members Joana Fialho and Ticha Vasconcelos. The several presentations were collected and edited by Fátima Grácio and sent to the several Grail countries. The booklet, with the same title as the program, contains texts of Alison Healey, Christa Werner Lorna Bowman, Anita Saisi, Regina Bashasha and Martha Heidkamp.

7. Registering and disseminating information

Registering and disseminating information is a very important part of our work. By registering we root into the future all our present activities and commitments and we clarify ideas and insights. By disseminating we share with others what our involvements are and make them useful to a larger community. The Grail continued to register and producing a series of 28 publications (*Publicações Terraço*), coordinated by Isabel Allegro, that came out of the cultural events at *Terraço* around the following main areas: spirituality, culture, social and political issues, and science. Before, Teresa Santa Clara coordinated throughout ten years, up until 1987, a series of publications called *Mudar a Vida* (To Change Life), which relevance was described earlier. Every external funded project has produced a series of newsletters and publications and, more recently, sites, videos, blogs, pages on facebook, etc.

The National Team developed *Yearly Activity Reports* of Grail work for internal information and for external funding entities. The National Team up until 2010 produced also on a regular basis a *National Newsletter*. Since then the internal dissemination of information is done through a collective email address. The Lien Network had its own newsletter, as well as the youth groups (*Riscos; Ir Mais Além*, etc.). Leaflets and brochures about the Grail Movement or Grail initiatives have also been produced both in Portuguese and in English.

Recently, the Grail has been working on its archives and documents. Under the coordination of Fátima Grácio and with the help of a professional archivist all Grail documentation has been organized and displayed for future consultation. The Grail library – composed, in its

majority, by Maria de Lourdes' and Teresa's libraries - is being catalogued and prepared to be used for external consultation.

8. Caring for the Future Foundation <http://www.fcuidarofuturo.pt/>

On July 13, 2001 the Grail Association in Portugal established, by the initiative of Maria de Lourdes Pintasilgo, the Foundation *Cuidar O Futuro*. The name was inspired by the report *Caring for the Future* of the Independent Commission on Population and Quality of Life, chaired by Maria de Lourdes between 1991 and 1996.

The creation of the Foundation corresponded to the fulfillment of an idea developed, since the 90s, by the two founders of the Grail in Portugal, Maria de Lourdes Pintasilgo (1930-2004) and Teresa Santa Clara Gomes (1936-1996). The aim of the initial idea was to try to demonstrate the dynamism and the "theory" of the "praxis" of the work of the Grail in Portugal, by setting up a documentation center and creating a database with all the documentation of the Grail activities. For several reasons, this idea was not pursued.

In 2001, Maria de Lourdes picked up the idea and proposed the project 'The Future of the Past', a Documentation and Publication Centre of the Grail archives, reporting actions, initiatives, projects and other Grail achievements between 1957 and 2000, as well as the archives of its two founders. Since the documents produced by Maria de Lourdes Pintasilgo and Teresa Santa Clara in both the national and international contexts constituted a significant part of the theoretical framework of the work done by the Grail in Portugal, special urgency was given to the processing of this documentation, which started in 2003. Maria de Lourdes still took the first steps in the preparation of the organization of her personal archive.

After Maria's passing away in 2004, Fatima Grácio became president of the Foundation. In 2005 a start was made with the treatment of the historical archive of Maria de Lourdes Pintasilgo, task performed by a team of young professionals. Between 2005 and 2010 were treated 50,000 documents and on January 23rd, 2008 was launched the first online portal of a personal archive in Portugal: <http://www.arquivopintasilgo.pt/arquivopintasilgo/Site/default.aspx>

Besides the treatment of the documentation of Maria de Lourdes, the Foundation had three ongoing Research and Action programs in the following areas: *Literacy-Women- Leadership, Development and Quality of Life: New Approaches* and *Self-education for Health*. In the context of these programs various seminars, conferences, training programs and workshops

were organized. Methodologies of adult education were experimented and enriched with new approaches, which subsequently are influencing nowadays the way of working in Grail contexts of non-formal education. Several publications were edited resulting from these programs and were spread among Grail participants of Portuguese speaking Grail countries. In 2010 the Foundation published an anthology with texts of Maria de Lourdes Pintasilgo in Portuguese, English and French languages, entitled *Towards a New Paradigm: a world based on care*.

Between 2010 and 2012 Maria do Loreto Paiva Couceiro assumed the presidency of the Foundation, followed in 2012 by Margarida Amélia Santos. The whole vast private archive of Maria de Lourdes Pintasilgo, consisting in the received and produced documents throughout her life in different political social and academic contexts, was donated on the second of December 2014 by the Foundation *Cuidar O Futuro* to the *Centro de Documentação 25 de Abril* of the University of Coimbra. For those who read Portuguese, visit: <http://www.cd25a.uc.pt/index.php?r=site/page&view=newsevents&p=1970>

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