

Majorities, minorities. Adult religious education in liminal spaces

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1. Liminality in Context: The Taller Teológico and its Framework

Mireia Vidal

When the Taller Teológico team (TT) sat down to think about the framework and context in which we work, one of the characteristics that we identified was that of being a minority. Certainly, our work develops in a country with a Catholic (nominal) majority, which is 73.1% of the Spanish population. But it also true that we do not find ourselves in the mainstream of Spanish Protestantism as a space of theological reflection. According to the FERED, there are almost 1,200,000 Protestants distributed across a broad range of Evangelical/Protestant churches, of which 400,000 are active. The IEE has around 30 congregations all over Spain and perhaps 3200 active members, in an optimistic estimation. By comparison the Baptist church has about 30,000 members, 11,000 of whom are active, and the Philadelphia churches number 150,000 members. This condition of being a religious minority, actually a minority within the minority, is often lived with a sense of frustration and impotence, as a conflict zone more than one of construction. However, there is a vitality and dynamism, especially in our Workshops, that goes against this general experience, making it recede in the face of an experience of a «spontaneous community» that spreads to the churches of the Workshops' participants. We also encounter an evident reality that in the Workshops (TTBB) people come from different ecclesial contexts, some more liberal, some more conservative, but all of them looking for a differentiated space, distinguished from the church, although related to it.

Taking up these realities, we realized that being a minority does not have to be the same as being marginalized. On the contrary, being liminal, that is, being on the threshold (*limen* in latin) situates us in a privileged position both in relation to the churches to which we belong and to the society around us. In these lectures, we want to explain why.

1. ORIGINS OF THE TALLER TEOLÓGICO

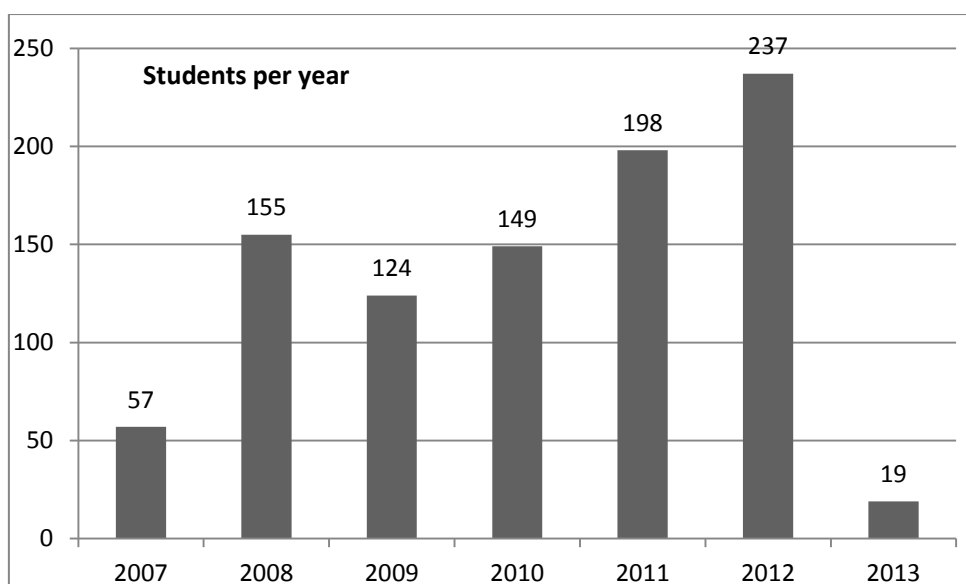
The origins of the Theological Workshop dates back to the year 2007, when the SEUT Theological Faculty, an ecumenical and interdenominational seminary closely linked to the Spanish Evangelical Church (IEE), identified the need to launch a program to train local communities, especially in the framework of the IEE, but also beyond it. Its name, «Workshop», made clear its interest in integrating the communities in the task of *doing theology*, thus defining a platform open to experimentation and to the felt needs of the community itself. Evidently, the character of the SEUT Faculty and of the IEE oriented the project towards a theology that can be described as liberal. We have not always known how to integrate the communities in this creative theological process, often due to the theoretical nature of the materials. In this sense we have yet to meet the challenge to respond to the communities in a more versatile way. But the fact remains that this orientation shaped the task of the TT from the beginning, especially through two tools that we developed: the Courses and the Workshops. While the Courses permit us to maintain a contact more anchored in the communities, the Workshop format facilitates our outreach to a wider ecclesial spectrum and enables us to experience first-hand the practical dimension of the Workshops. A significant part of the lectures presented here has emerged directly through our experiences in the TTBB.

2. THE SOCIO-ECLESIAL PROFILE

2.1. The Courses

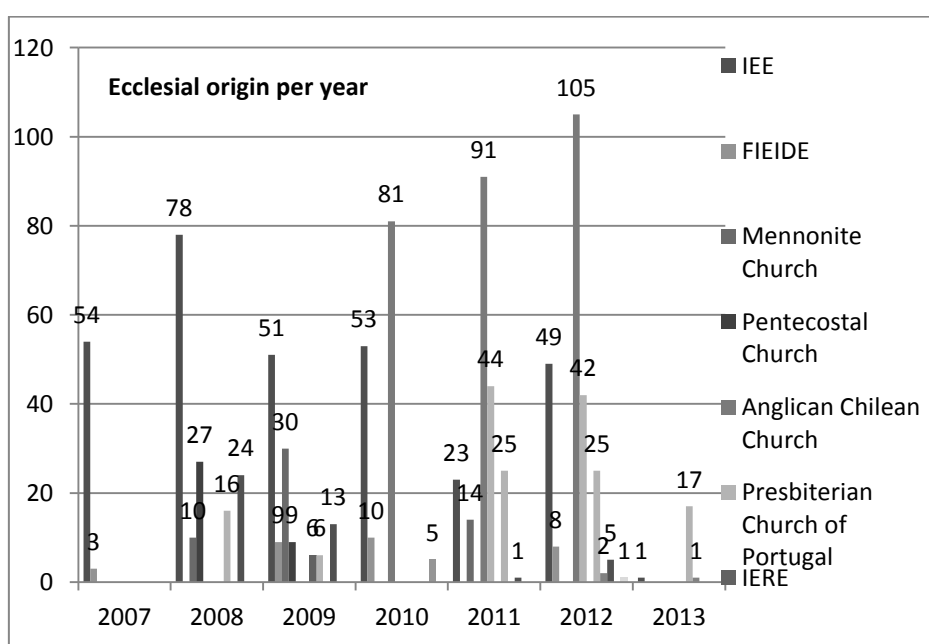
The Courses are studied in local congregations by autonomous study groups to which the material is provided. The Courses' community-based formula has obtained good results up to now, especially in the IEE churches. The varied backgrounds and different theological positions of the Courses and their authors (all teachers of SEUT up to now) have led us to a relatively broad spectrum of churches: Brethren, Free Churches, Mennonites and Pentecostals. Figure 1 shows the evolution dating back from the year 2007 up to the present of the number of participants in the study groups, while Figure 2 shows the ecclesial origin.

Figure 1



As you can see in the first graph, which records the registrations per year, 2009 to 2012 shows an ascending pattern, and a considerable decrease in the present year 2013. Many of the enrolled groups in the year 2012 are still active, but the flow of registrations seems to have stopped. On the other hand, a significant part of the numerical strength of the Study Groups comes from abroad, especially from Portugal (up to last year) but particularly from Chile, where both the TT and the SEUT Faculty maintain programs.

Figure 2

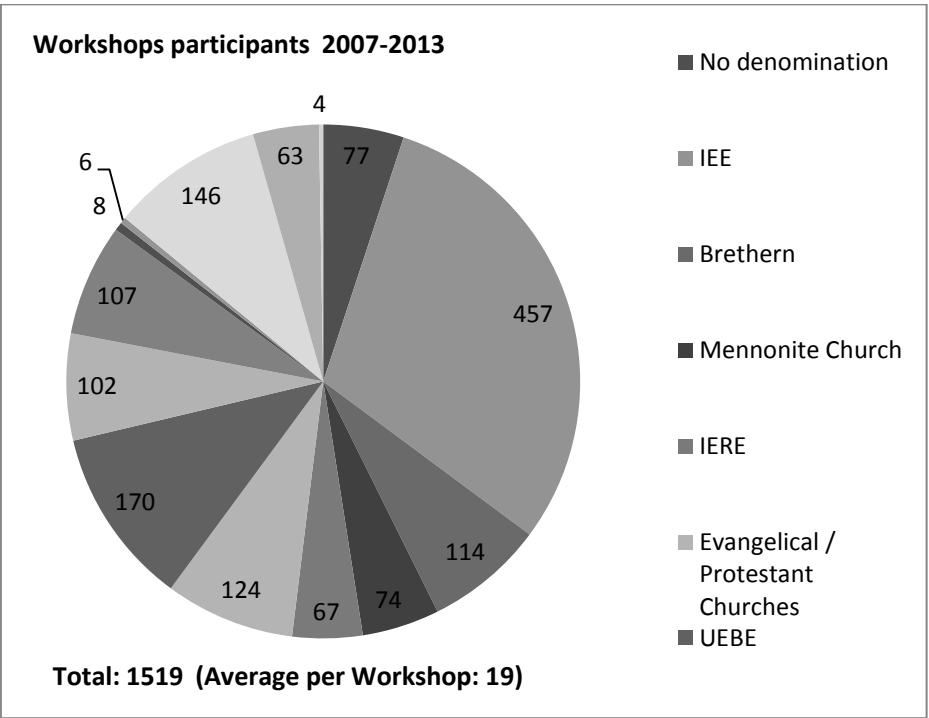


The Course formula shows certain symptoms of exhaustion in spite of the new materials that have been published. In particular, we require individual models in order to permit individual church members to study, even though there is no quorum in his or her community to form a group. One of the main reasons that could be adduced for this is the difficulty of articulating a liminal space within communities, as the communities themselves already bear characteristics of liminality.

2.2. Workshops

The Workshops represent the most dynamic section of the TT thanks to its flexible yet more intensive format. Each one of the locations where the TT maintains a Workshop program shows its own particularity. Thus, in Valencia the largest group taking part in the Workshops comes from a Catholic background. In Barcelona, the majority are from the IEE, whereas in Alicante (where the program has only been operating for one year) the Baptists are the largest group. The denominational diversity is highlighted in Madrid.

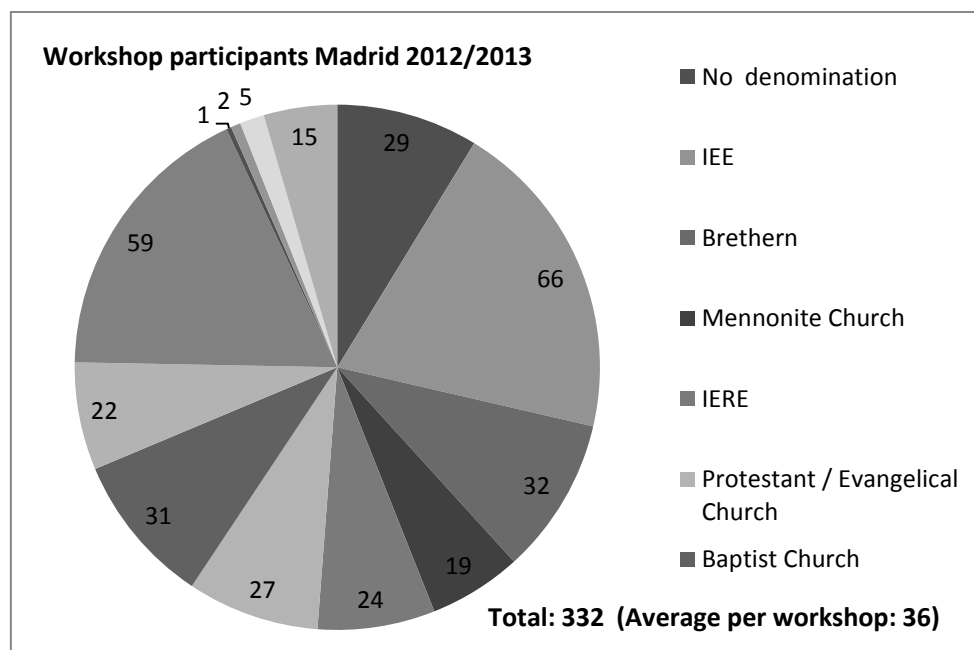
Figure 3



Despite the diversity, the graphic makes visible the minority horizon of the TT. In the seven years that the program has been in operation, approximately 1500 people have attended the TTBBs. Furthermore, many participate on a regular basis, that is to say,

they return to the Workshops, so the actual number of participants is lower than the total. The majority of the participants are from the IEE, especially in the location of Barcelona. Their presence is more equalized with other denominations in Madrid, while in Valencia the IEE participation is much reduced. In Alicante, the participants belong to the IEE in general or to the UEBE (the Baptist Union), the two churches that are currently supporting the project locally.

Figure 4



Another sociological consideration regarding the TTBB is the significant presence of immigrants: around 25% of the assistants come from Latin America. The age range of the majority of the participants in the TTBB is 45-60 years old, and the percentage of men and women is balanced. Some of them have university studies while others have only basic education.

3. LIMINALITY

In order to understand why we talk about «liminality» in the context of the TT, it is necessary to interpret the data presented from a quantitative as well as a qualitative perspective. Several «minority identity» levels converge here. On one hand, our Protestant affiliation marks us as a religious minority in a country with a Catholic majority, although said majority is rather more nominal than real. On the other hand, the theological tradition that characterizes the institutions that give life to the TT

situates us in a very concrete point within the broad range of Spanish Protestantism. This is the first lecture about liminality. Although the concept cannot be applied to majority-minority issues uncritically, it can be related to the border identity. In this sense, then, the TT finds itself in a space intrinsically defined as «liminal» since it is located outside mainstream Protestantism. This is a case of “situational liminality”.

However, within this liminal framework there is another level or horizon that we shall call «attitudinal liminality», and that is the one we are interested in exploring. This is related to crossing borders and the experience of community that is generated in the TTBB. Each one of the attendees certainly comes from a specific ecclesial structure. Some come from churches with a liberal and ecumenical tradition, while others from backgrounds generally characterized as conservative. All of them, nevertheless, look for a space that responds to their theological curiosity, even when the search for this space consciously or unconsciously implies crossing both denominational and structural boundaries. Many actually verbally expressed the desire to find this kind of “no man’s land” that permits them to satisfy their inquisitiveness, which is not addressed in their immediate church context either because of its lack of infrastructure or due to the particular orientation of the community. Nevertheless, their desire pushes them to search for this space outside the strict limits of the church, while their commitment to their local churches remains unchanged and they refuse to migrate to other communities.

In this context, the TTBB have installed themselves in a liminal space, in the «ecclesial interstices», as a kind of «mobile learning community» that sometimes, either spontaneously or in a more regulated way, gives rise to a context where the perception of the identity is modified. This crossing of boundaries or the formation of a “sporadic community” is what we have called the liminal landscape.

The concept of «liminality» was coined for the first time by the anthropologist A. von Gennep and referred to the phases of the rites of passage. Rites of passage represent and symbolize a person’s change in status (such as from childhood to adulthood), and are associated with the realm of the uncontrollable (life, death, the sacred, etc...). They consist of three phases: separation, liminality and reincorporation. Subsequently, V. Turner, also an anthropologist, developed the study of liminality and its importance in relation to social change. Liminality has many applications and implications, the majority of them related to being outside the norms or established patterns, along with the ambiguous, the marginalized or the cast offs. Neither is it unknown to the Christian experience (Phil. 3:20). Not all implications of liminality are pertinent in our

case, but we will emphasize two of them: creativity and the dialectic of structure - anti-structure.

3.1. Creativity

To risk entry into a liminal place implies entering in an ambiguous space in which the norms of our context of origin remain “on hold” in favor of the adoption of a “transitory identity”. At the moment when the patterns or schemes of our daily context no longer apply, then it is possible to assume other perspectives and attitudes that enable us to put in quarantine the place we come from and to analyze their pros and cons. Turner defines *communitas* as the voluntary or fluid crossing of borders along with the shared experience of an encounter that equalizes the participants, in as much as the transitory identity is shared. The *communitas* arises spontaneously when a horizontal relationship exists that constitutes us as subjects and equalizes everyone. It is an «I-You» connection in which the encounter defines our modality of relationship. The *communitas* is thus the result of a spontaneous bond that transcends cultural differences as well as social and ecclesial ties in a particular time and place, opening us up to something new that changes our vision of the places from which we come. This does not imply a lack of structures, but the presence of fluid structures that, because of their temporality, are not meant to last. In this sense, the TTBB do not lack structure, because there is always a speaker and fixed, predictable spaces. However, here the *communitas* takes the shape of a one-time learning community.

3.2. Dialectic

One of the most obvious characteristics of liminality and *communitas* is its reciprocity towards what we have called “ecclesial structures”. Although it seems that the relationship between structure and anti-structure (*communitas*) is based on opposition, the fact is that they are two sides of the same coin. Liminality by its nature is a transient condition, a phase of passage, a state of being neither here nor there. To find oneself in a liminal state is to leave one context to immerse oneself in another that projects a future horizon. This is so because it allows us to reincorporate ourselves into the usual structures with a fresh perspective and originality. In this sense the *communitas* is meant to revert eventually to the original space from which the participants come and to make it more dynamic.

This is also the experience of the TTBB. As I have already said, many participants attend looking for a space that transcends ordinary church patterns and orders, but they do so with the willingness to return to their churches or communities and feed them with what they have experienced in liminality. In this way, the *communitas* that is generated in the TTBB responds in more flexible way to the search for new ecclesial models that respond to the demands that arise from contemporary sensibilities. Their temporary character, not extended in time, and the fact that they are self-contained, allows them to combine experimentation with more versatile structures and models with the participants' commitment to their respective communities and churches.

It is interesting to note that Turner spoke about *communitas* as the subjunctive mode of society, the sphere of desires and expectations. So in this sense the liminal space and the willingness to travel through it appear to be necessary for the church itself.

4. CONCLUSIONS

Necessary liminality emerges as the unifying experience of the *communitas* of the TTBB. On one hand, it provides the transit horizon that enables the transformation of our identities: majorities and minorities, or the ecclesial or social role that we usually play fade away in favor of a transversal horizon of understanding, because this implies assuming a new transitory situation. On the other, liminality broadens the church's horizons when the participants return and are reincorporated. In this sense, the willingness to cross barriers and to leave the immediate context in which one usually lives is not only therapeutic for the person in question, but also for the context from which she or he comes. Thus what we call situational liminality and attitudinal liminality are stations needed to "oxygenate" our immediate contexts. The TTBB happen to be one of the platforms where oxygenation can take place. Its survival then is linked to its ability to keep open the liminal horizon.

2. Generative dynamics. Performances in the space

Gerson Amat

1. OUR EDUCATIONAL PROPOSAL

From our liminal position, which has been described by Mireia at the beginning of our intervention, and from our theological and pedagogical options, that Rainer has just exposed, the Theological Workshop was created six years ago by the Faculty of Theology - SEUT (Evangelical United Theological Seminar) as a program of adult theological training for the I.E.E. (Iglesia Evangélica Española - Spanish Evangelical Church). That is, we have already a practice of six years of working in the service of Christian individual, groups and communities, inside and outside the I.E.E., in that space where the I.E.E. moves and interacts with people who belong to other churches, with others which has drifted away from church institutions and are moving in a pilgrimage of searching, and with those others for whom religion is not a determining factor in their lives.

With this perspective in mind, the educational offer of Theological Workshop is developing in order to achieve a purpose: Learn of Christ (cf. Mt 11.29) to live as competent Christian communities, to the service of our society and of our neighbor.

To achieve this purpose, we make a basic methodological choice, which is to encourage in many ways the reflection and personal involvement of educational subjects.

It is true that all the life is like a school, but we all need specific moments and areas in which we situate to learn from our praxis. Therefore, our specific proposal as Theological Workshop is to facilitate the creation of spaces in which we may expose ourselves together, intentionally, to certain stimuli of learning that will be generated using appropriate methods. In the TW, we have developed two specific methods:

- The Study Groups
- The Workshops

2. THE STUDY GROUPS

As we have seen, the TW courses are designed for the creation of Study Groups at the heart of the local churches, both inside and outside the Spanish Evangelical Church, as a part of all the educational activity of the Christian community. Our entire educational program is pointing the local churches, to their ministries, their competencies and their growth. Although we can find some isolated individuals been involved in our courses, for us it is essential that the work takes place primarily within the church, ensuring that the training we are proposing is at the service of the Church of Christ and its mission.

With this approach, the courses are prepared with different objectives: since the formation of all the members of a church on a particular theme, to the specific basic training of the different community ministries (deacons, volunteers, responsible for specific tasks, etc.).

In each case, the same members of the Study Group choose the course in which they are interested, and agree to dates, schedules and the pace of the meetings. Finally, they choose from among them a supervisor, on the one hand for encouraging and moderating the group meetings, and for keeping in touch with TW, on the other.

Our learning platform is the website. It is the general meeting space for the educational community, for all the people who participate in Theological Workshop. After registration on our web page, texts and educational resources for the courses can be downloaded and printed, so that each of the members of the group can dispose of them. These materials are didactically processed to enable both the personal work of each of the participants, as well as the work in common with the Study Group.

Once the course is finished, we ask each Study Group to make a complete evaluation of the same, in order to provide us the progressive improvement of the courses. Where it is possible, we try also to enhance the exchange between Study Groups of different churches who have worked a same course, in order to create a new space in which to share their experiences and impressions.

People who have worked with us over the last six years have made clear that this experience has not only provided them training, thereby satisfying their interest in learning, but it has also meant for them the possibility to recognize each other involved in a common effort.

3. THE WORKSHOPS

The WW are specific learning spaces, like small seminars, free and directed to an open public, in which we work one specific topic related with human life and with the Christian faith, with the collaboration of experts in each subject and, over all, in its communication. Over four hours, and from a solid exposition of each theme, we try to encourage all participants to contribute something useful and important for everyone else, pursuing the subject from the praxis and for the praxis.

Through dialogue, in an atmosphere of openness and respect, the WW become an experimental space that tries to involve all participants in the exciting task of "doing theology from the base", a theology that is meaningful to them and to their environment.

During the academic year 2012 / 2013 we have been able to offer twenty WW: eight in Madrid, five in Barcelona, five in Valencia and two in Alicante. As in previous years, in these spaces we have tried to offer an agenda at once committed, from a Biblical perspective, with our Christian history, with the Church today, and with problems of our society. Beside old questions, we have been able to meet emerging issues, in communion with other people who have reached that same point along very different paths.

We are going to consider now, very succinctly, to each of the various elements making up the educational method of the WW: participants, learning space, process, subjects, didactics and evaluation.

3.1. The participants

As Mireia has explained in her intervention, in our WW participate men and women coming from different social classes and cultural backgrounds, with university studies or with a basic preparation, and also of very different ages, from students to elderly veterans in ecclesial life.

The audience is ecumenical: most of the participants in Madrid, Barcelona and Alicante belong to Evangelical churches of different church traditions, but among them there are always some people coming from the Roman Catholic Church. This trend is reversed in the WW developed in Valencia, where we are collaborating with the Dominican section of the Theological Faculty "San Vicente Ferrer". The Workshops are there organized and held with an explicitly Ecumenical approach, explicitly open also

to the general public, and with a majority shareholding of Roman Catholic people, moving mostly in grassroots communities and environments "on the periphery". These people are just sharing with us an important part of the liminal spaces in which we also move.

In the space of the WW we can find people who attend them occasionally, interested by a specific topic, but also "pilgrims", people emotionally moving between extreme liminal spaces, away from any institutional Church, and seeking reliable religious and strongly significant answers for their life time.

Finally, some participants have quite clear old ideas, while others are more open to new thoughts. In general, the announced topic has attracted all of them, and all of them are involved, willing to listen to something that helps them in their lives.

3.2. The learning space

We have yet mentioned that, convinced as we are that the adult is competent in his own learning process, the WW try to generate spaces in which this process can happen. From the time of projection, which includes the choice of themes and places, through the call, to the completion of each Workshop; since the provision of physical space in order to favour the encounter, to the election of the didactics, everything is at the service of the generation of these spaces, as places where we all can learn in the meeting and in the dialogue.

3.3. The learning process

The learning process we propose in the short time in which develops each Workshop comes to be a small planned itinerary of participation and interaction. This journey is developed through some specific experimental acts designed to allow and stimulate the participants in every moment to assume his role, as subjects of their own learning, at the individual level, and to contribute positively to the learning of the others, creating in this way a kind of communitarian personality.

3.4. The expert – speaker

Within that learning space that tries to create every Workshop, the speakers are chosen not only on the basis of their knowledge but also, and above all, of his

experience as communicators. Their function, in addition to properly expose the topic to be worked, is to offer impulses, contents and prospects throughout the Workshop, to encourage and accompany the autonomous assimilation and reflection of participants. In this way, the traditional distribution of roles of "teacher" and "student" is limited to brief periods of exposure that facilitate the learning of educational subjects.

Not always the speakers assimilate what we want with our Workshops. A good part of our work, as members of the Theological Workshop team, is to help the "experts" to situate themselves in our "liminal" position, and to "enter" in our pedagogical and didactical perspective.

3.5. The subject-matter

At the time of drawing up the annual program of the WW, we try to offer a balanced diversity of matters in order to satisfy, or to wake up, the demands of the Christian communities, as well as the current concerns of religiously interested persons, taking into account also the specialty of the speaker, his current field of research.

One of the major concerns in the TW is the current marginalization of theology, which is no longer considered as really competent to offer vital guidance to people. Theology, seen only a few centuries ago as the mother of the sciences, today, in spite of certain *return to religion*, has lost almost all its influence in our secularized society.

In this regard, an important obstacle that we want to overcome in the Theological Workshop is the artificial dichotomy between *spiritual life* and *secular life*, which has as consequence that the communication of faith is carried out as if it has nothing to do with everyday life. In this sense, the WW remain in search of what is vitally relevant, always trying to integrate religion in all the areas of life.

3.6. Didactics

The scope of the transmission of the faith, in what we need to situate theological training, cannot put aside an appropriate didactic approach. From our pedagogical view, in which we consider the human being as competent in their own learning process, we cannot adopt a communication of the faith that resembles an indoctrination, which always put under tutelage the educational subject.

The WW, as their name suggests, are *practical* in nature, and designed to allow in its space an active participation, so that the adult is actually an educational subject that experiences and discover. *Teaching resources* are, therefore, at the service of this participation in learning, so that the exposure of contents never predominates on participatory activity. From this point of view, we try to use audio-visual aids, as well as handicrafts and all kind of “sensorial” or “body” dynamics, didactics that consider the wholeness of the human being.

However, as the central or axial method, to the service of which are elected the different resources by each expert-speaker, we try to offer, as it has been already said, the *opening of a space for dialogue*. This open space needs also to be maintained, from the very first moment, through the discussion and debate, favouring always the free speech and the respectful listening, trying to reach the agreement, where possible, but admitting the discrepancy in any case.

In this area of freedom and respect is important to us that there is always space, for people who wish, to narrate their personal experience, which always has to be freely exposed to others as an offer of growth and personal enrichment, so it never shall be assessed or judged.

Last but not least, and reminding now that our educational proposal is directed “to live as competent Christian *communities*, to the service of our *society*”, we cannot forget the communitarian dimension of our learning, which moves us to the methodological choice of the group of work, not only to facilitate mutual learning, but as a space where we can experience the community, both in a Christian and in a secular sense, in a practical way.

3.8. The evaluation

The participants have always the last word. In each of the WW participants receive an "Evaluation sheet", in which everybody has the opportunity to express his opinion regarding what has meant for them his experience of the Workshop, in relation to the various aspects related to the theme, the speaker, and his dynamic performance.

Collected Evaluation sheets are then analysed to be applied to the progressive improvement of our programming. Results are also communicated to speakers, as a constructive criticism for helping them to perfect his work.

4. CONCLUSION

Perhaps the tone of our work is precisely the progressive and constant evaluation of our work to support those who are "on the margins" of the churches and of our society, in a "liminal" space and time of transition from a past without return towards a new social and ecclesial models that we still do not know.

I was hesitating about to include among the methodological elements the accompaniment. But I think this is more than a "didactical" option. In the case of the Study Groups as well as the Workshops, the same that in all our work, all the people who work at Theological Workshop are always taking care of individual persons, groups and local churches.

After the experience of these six years of work, we realize that we and all the persons, groups and churches involved with us in "Taller Teológico" form a great educational community. So, we are reaffirmed in the conviction that the churches, and people who compose them, should not be treated as mere passive agents of learning, but as active and able "navigators", to whom we support and who accompany us in turn in our common voyage by the borders.

3. Learning and spirituality in liminal spaces in the Catholic Church

Montse Escribano

Introduction:

Minorities and majorities inside the Catholic Church have generated interesting movements. Today, we are going to see that they are not antagonistic powers fighting each other, but rather spaces for change and opportunity. If we understand theology and adult learning from the hermeneutical perspective of liminality, it will allow us a new critical way of understanding the world around us. As believers, it might well bring us closer to our Trinitarian God, as we are going to see now.

1. Following Jesus and the need of sense for believers

A. The Second Vatican Council, liminal space expansion. A brief historical background

In learning and in teaching theology, since the mid-twentieth century, we have seen deep changes that have led to a shift of some of its initial axes. I will situate the beginning of these changes at two points in history -the first, inside the Protestant Church and the second, in the Catholic Church itself.

The first change occurred within the Protestant tradition in Europe, and it was caused by new theological and exegetical currents. Changes were born from a new awareness which questioned the meaning of faith amidst a changing world.

The second change occurred within the Catholic Church, but a little later. Indeed, in France after the Second World War, some theological currents as the "nouvelle théologie" appeared as isolated movements. Yet, they turned out to be essential as to revelation and human experience, and they eventually had a crucial influence on the Second Vatican Council, its theoretical foundations and further conclusions. The celebration of this important ecclesial event still means at least two fundamental things to us today: a new *openness* and the *mission* in the heart of the Catholic Church.

- The first, that is *openness*, came about thanks to the intuition of Pope John XXIII. According to him, the Church needed an "aggiornamento", and this was only possible focusing on Jesus Christ, and simultaneously on the world around taking special care of people's "joys and hopes"¹. The Dominican theologian Yves Congar echoed these changes and noted that: "In a few weeks, John XXIII together with the Council created a new ecclesial climate. The main openness had come up from the hierarchy. From this point forward, renewing forces that could barely show up openly, could develop freely."²
- For the Church this meant a new era, both in its self-conception, and in its way of understanding the world with renewed compassion. From that very moment, the relationship with other Churches, spiritual traditions or religions, were not of censorship anymore, but of cooperation and dialogue. Likewise, the relationship between the Catholic Church and Science did change in the same way. It thus opened a new paradigm, which resulted in a new vision that allowed a different interpretation of reality. This new attitude led to a new understanding of the human being, and to the recognition of the inherent capacity of humans for dialogue and interaction. Therefore, dialogue, human interaction and the acceptance of diversity became necessary tools to enhance these changes. As a matter of fact, the positive effects of this new paradigm could soon be felt in the way Catholics started practising their faith in a wider way than ever, now that they were sensitive to the sacred in other traditions, sensitive to Science, sensitive to Culture in a way that broadened their once narrow vision of their religion.
- The second fundamental aspect of this Conciliar Church –that is *mission*– meant focusing on the central position of a Trinitarian God serving humanity and history as a whole. This implied the acceptance of the Bible as the Word of God now to be available to everyone. The changes came along with a transformation in the liturgical and sacramental celebrations, which now reflected the diversity and creativity of a Church, which as a community, could listen to the Word of God and celebrate life joyfully in one's mother tongue for the very first time. Believers hence understood that beyond attending Mass, listening to the Word of God and obeying it of course, it became their responsibility to take an active part in their Church. Indeed, in the light of the Trinitarian God the communities became spaces for com-union and hope for all humans.

¹ I take this expression of pastoral Encyclical *Gaudium et Spes*, n. 1: "The joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the people of our time, especially of the poor or afflicted, are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ. Indeed, nothing genuinely human fails to raise an echo in their hearts. The Christian community is composed of people who, united in Christ and guided by the Holy Spirit in their journey to the kingdom of the Father and they have welcomed the news of salvation to communicate it to every person. The Church therefore feels truly and intimately linked with mankind and its history.

² Yves Congar, *Verdaderas y falsas reformas en la Iglesia*. Madrid 1973, p. 3.

Openness and *mission* also and mainly meant that the Church itself had to experience a revolutionary change to promote *dialogue* and to *serve* the world. I would highlight three major areas in which this change became obvious:

- As to the Bible and the study of Christ, there was a clear intention to go back to the origins and look for a historical meaning. This led to the development of ecumenical, systematic, pastoral and spiritual theologies among others.
- As to anthropology, from then on, concepts such as personal autonomy, the necessity of an ethical life, political involvement, and participation in any decision made in one's parish or diocese, as well as a solid theological training became essential.
- And as to the social dimension of the change experienced by the Catholic Church, social issues such as famine, labour rights, the environment, economic crisis, and social organizations –to name a few– all became *locis theologis*. The believers thus had to take an active part in trying to solve these problems.

This revolutionary change not only affected the Catholic Church hierarchy but also and mainly all those members of the Church who had long demanded more responsibility and more participation. It is worth mentioning the active part women had in this long-time claim, and it is quite relevant at this point to mention that women were never fully integrated into the Catholic Church and were mostly at the edge of it.

The laity easily incorporated the need to interpret their faith from the idea of "the signs of the times". That meant that revelation and ecclesiology had to be situated in a human, economic, political, social, and historical context. In other words, *Openness* and *mission* did mean that faith had to be considered within its social, cultural and economic context. That also meant believers could influence history. Yet, in spite of all these changes there was still much to do

As a result, the Catholic Church that once was a sacred unique isolated institution very much like a monarchy with a Pope instead of a king at its head turned into a dynamic, participative "People of God". One of the immediate consequences of this change was that the walls built along the ages to separate the different religions began to crack. Likewise, inside the Catholic Church there were new perspectives. Indeed, Pope John XXIII might well have been right when he uttered these words: "just like an aurora"³.

³ *Gauder Mater Ecclesia*, speech delivered by Pope John XXIII during the solemn opening of the Second Vatican Council, October 11, 1962.

B. The pursuit of sense

According to the theologian Juan Antonio ESTRADA: "The question about the purpose of life and what makes it worthwhile, is a universal issue," Yet, he admits that: "the answers to such a question depend on the culture, society and the historical moment."⁴ This is indeed a basic necessity for a human being to answer such a question. As believers, we call it Spirituality. It is self-evident that not only do we have to live, but we also have to answer this question so that we can lead a better life. This universal necessity, though, is always defined by the culture we belong to. What does culture mean? To me, it means our economical, historical and religious context that is the context in which human beings actually *are, move and exist*⁵. In the various churches, these contexts are different in every country and even every region within a country with different languages, different beliefs and different habits. Therefore, those frames are essential if we are to understand our faith. Indeed, we practise our faith and we grow as individuals and members of society within those frames.

Then, focusing on the *frames* becomes interesting to us because it enables us to situate our faith and understanding. We can say that these *frames* are exactly where we live our faith and where we deploy the beliefs that sustain both our individual and social life. But, the frames always have epistemological and comprehensive keys that determine the socio-cultural context in which we operate and in which we live our Christian faith. So, the sources of knowledge, comprehensive keys, languages, symbols and assumed truths that sustain our life make our faith meaningful. Therefore, we must consider these *frames* in a critical way.

To make things clearer, I will compare these frames to an ecosystem where different species live together. It is clear that the frame is the space where we interact. Besides, with a frame, there is always a space for change. Indeed, if we consider history, we can identify the various spiritual and prophetic movements that did make it. All these movements have led to great changes and most of all they have led to new ways of understanding religion. It is worth mentioning that each and every time they appear in history these movements have two fundamental features: on the one hand they intend to go back to a Trinitarian God and on the other hand they want religion to serve human beings.

⁴ Juan Antonio Estrada, *El cristianismo en una sociedad laica*. Cuarenta años después del Vaticano II. Desclée de Brouwer, Bilbao 2006, p. 9.

⁵ *Acts*, 17: 28 "for in Him we live and move and have our being

However, we should keep in mind that these *frames* are not predetermined, static or unmovable. This is why the “democratic balance” of a *frame* can be severely reduced or on the contrary, significantly widened. As a matter of fact, right now we are suffering a clear example of this in southern Europe where the peoples of Spain, Greece, Portugal to name a few are living under a financial tyranny and social fascism that are strangling democracy.

Religion cannot ignore such issues. Indeed, there are certain spiritual and prophetic movements with a clear political dimension that can transform the frame from which we conceive reality. All of these movements have the same goal: to protect the life of each and every human being. Throughout history we have many examples of these transforming and liberating changes: Antonio de Montesinos (XVI c), Catherine of Siena (XIII c), Martin Luther (XVI c), Mahatma Gandhi (XX c), Martin Luther King (XX c) and Rosa Louise Parks (XXI c) to name but a few did widen in a significant way these frames.

I would like to emphasize at this point that we mustn't stop intending to find opportunities to widen and strengthen democracy. I do think that faith is fundamental to the comprehension of the European Union project, and although this might seem the point of view of a minority, it is a central point in this reflection on the liminal spaces within the Catholic Church.

It is actually my purpose to get a deeper insight into the way Jesus of Nazareth considered reality around. It was definitely a political consideration as He always focused on the helpless –that is, those who had been despised and condemned. In doing so we have many questions to answer:

- Are the liminal spaces from which we work interesting enough to promote social changes leading to a more humane way of life?
- Are the liminal spaces from which we work powerful enough to promote dialogue?
- Are the liminal spaces from which we work critical enough for us to manage in public life as believers?
- Are the liminal spaces from which we work able to make the citizens aware of how important it is for them to participate in democracy?

2. Learning through liminal spaces and theologies

Since Vatican II it was increasingly clear that faith could not survive ignoring political reality. During the sixties and seventies of the past Century all the social changes that

occurred started at the edge of society. All these changes, including secularization, demilitarization, feminism and the Civil Rights movement to name but a few did promote religious changes too. One might wonder: how and why do these changes occur? To me, the answer is quite simple: these changes do occur when people seek sense.

It is obvious that there is then a critical approach to the *authority of Tradition*. A *Tradition* which has been transmitted both through “magister” and through the work of theologians. However, little by little some women and men who were not part of the clergy started to give new answers to the question of sense from a believer’s perspective. Therefore a new balance was to be found within the Catholic Church, its minorities and majority. It is clear that this “interesting situation” was not new, but it arose a new consciousness.

Indeed, the Christians who claimed to gain a new perspective in their faith were not part of the majority but rather part of the minority. This is when, for the very first time, women started to produce theology academically as they were admitted in Theology Schools at last. This is fundamental as to the changes that were to occur because women did introduce spirituality based on their human experience. A silent revolution had definitely started.

The very way of teaching and learning theology changed: people gathered together to think about and discuss religious issues of course, but also social and political issues. Moreover, to do so people didn’t necessarily meet inside a church. On the contrary, they preferably met elsewhere. Actually, in doing so from the liminal spaces of the church they have brought social, economical and even sexual issues inside the Church. Simultaneously, new academic disciplines –each with its critical methodology– entered the Church. I am referring very especially to psychology, sociology, philosophy, history and political science. Indeed at that time a new language was created: *gender* (Joan Scott); *intersectionality* (Kymberly Crenshaw); *subjectivity* and *power* (M. Foucault); *kyriarchi* (Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza); *agency capacity* (A. Sen and Martha Nussbaum), *recognition* (Nancy Fraser); and the *representation of identity* and *performativity* (Judith Butler). At that time, believers definitely made their Church wider and more relevant.

Sensus fidei became more significant than ever. Reality could now be understood through a renewed stronger faith thanks to the contribution of these believers. This all meant more freedom, more justice, and in a way less human suffering.

A. Theologies of Liberation and the possibility of other theologies

The liberation theologies that emerged from the Latin American churches, both Catholic and Protestant were probably the most important contribution to theology as a whole in the 20th Century. This movement arose from the experience of social desperation, persecution and even death. The poor found one sole way to try to overcome such a situation: ask for God's help. Thus, it is clear that the Theologies of Liberation were not "invented" in any Western university. On the contrary, they did appear in the poorest neighbourhoods in the southern hemisphere where the biblical words "exodus", "liberation", "the poor" became especially relevant.

As I have already explained these theologies were not "produced" by white males belonging to the elite but they were born in various liminal contexts leading to a Black Theology, a Feminist Theology, a *Womanista* Theology, not to mention the very many theologies that emerged in Africa and Asia. I would call all this theological flourishing: "theologies on the move".

B. Theologies on the move that promote social changes

The liberation theologies have arisen due to the development of a critical methodology. They had the experiences of human beings, their search for sense and their need of hope, as a starting point. At the same time, they were able to generate a *mobilizing* understanding of the precarious reality around⁶. As they were not entitled to any right, they sought new ways to make their voices heard and achieve justice.

As believers and responsible citizens they developed a critical perspective that in the end was to change reality itself. Indeed, peace movements, the mobilization for civil rights, public marches against the militarization and the interventions of some states over others, concern about environmental issues and the feminist movement did play a decisive ecumenical role and changed –at least partially– the religious imagery and society at large.

It occurs to me that today all of this is as valid as ever. If we have a look at what has been called "the Arab Spring", that is the social movements that have led to a revolution in most North African and some Middle Eastern countries, the scheme is exactly the same. So is the social movement that started in Spain on 15th May at the very same time. Simultaneously the *Occupy Wall Street Movement* emerged in the

⁶ Judith Butler, *Marcos de guerra. Las vidas lloradas*. Paidós, Barcelona 2010.

USA. In each and every case, these social movements have appeared to express the citizens' refusal of more corruption, more speculation at the top of society and less rights, less opportunities, and less justice at the bottom of society. In sum, citizens on the move trying to promote a social and economical change that would free them from the current *bio-political* decisions that make life almost impossible. In twitter language, the *Hashtag* would be #Theologyintimesofoutrageouseconomicandsocialinjustice?#.

3. Learning through prophetic spiritualities: the case of the Catholic Church in Valencia

At this very point we are going to focus on three specific movements that have developed in the city of Valencia. These are: "Fòrum de Cristianisme i món d'Avui" [which I could translate as: Forum of Christianity in the world today]; "Grup de Dones Creients" [which I could translate as: Group of women believers]; and "Comunitats Populares Cristianes" [which I could translate as: Christian Popular Communities]. All these movements embody all the principles I have been referring to previously, namely:

- The fundamental role of the Second Vatican Council in encouraging believers to follow Jesus of Nazareth making the reality of the Kingdom more evident.
- The political involvement of believers who combat social and economic injustice in organizations that do strengthen the cultural life of the city. These organizations include neighbourhood associations and I would like to name very especially two of them: On the one hand, the *laioflautas*, a group of very active senior citizens and on the other hand, "Plataforma por los afectados por la hipoteca" (PAH) –an organization fighting the abuse of banks in the case of mortgages all over Spain. It is quite significant that this organization has just received international recognition as the European Parliament has just awarded it the prestigious European Citizen's Prize, honouring exceptional Europeans.
- A solid theological training which helps alleviate human suffering and seek freedom.
- These movements do follow Jesus' example in society. The way they do makes them belong to the liminal spaces of the conservative Valencian Church. Indeed, the hierarchy of the Church they belong to hasn't stop questioning them in a clear attempt to silence them.

Now, let's have a closer look at these movements separately.

A. The “Forum Cristianisme i món d’Avui”

This movement is a space for theological training and reflection. Since 1988, once a year over 600 people actively gather together for two days in order to achieve the ultimate goals of a prophetic and spiritual Christian life.

How?

- Practising freedom and co-responsibility in the mission of the Church.
- Paying special attention to “the sign of the times” to make sure those who suffer for any reason are attended.
- Embodying freedom processes to combat socioeconomic political and ecclesial neoconservative power.
- And last but not least, celebrating the redeeming action of God through liturgical creativity.

B. Grup de Dones Creients

It is a movement where women gather together to study biblical texts from a feminism point of view. As they put it, they are wearing “purple glasses” which enable them to see reality much better. Among their primary goals, I would mention the following ones:

- Making women more visible within the Church,
- Re-interpreting the Bible introducing the concept of “gender”,
- And of course, denouncing the unbearable social and ecclesial situation of inequality which women have long faced not only in society at large but also and mainly inside their own Church.

Therefore it is space for personal growth, for critical spirituality, for promoting the work of female theologians, and obviously for helping the poor specially females. To sum up, it is a group of women with different religious beliefs and spiritual traditions, but with the same vision of the world when it comes to practising *dyakonia*

C. Comunitats Cristianes Populars

They first appeared in the seventies in rural and poor areas and rapidly reached university students. One of the most famous of these movements is the HOAC, although in Valencia there are various communities that regularly meet to pray and to take action regarding social issues.

These communities besides belong to a social network called Christiannetworks. They are especially active in spreading *viral* news through the Web with the clear intention of giving their unconventional thoughts a bigger audience. Actually they do believe that knowledge is power.

4. Conclusion

To sum up, I would say that it is clear to us by now that *liminality* in terms of hermeneutical key has fostered our religious imagination and therefore widened the Church making it more democratic and multi-coloured. Besides, theology or rather theologies are now “on the move” as they pay special attention to reality around with the firm compromise to change it. Last but not least, it has allowed us to consider Jesus’ spirituality as a liminal spirituality itself. Indeed, Jesus has always acted with compassion, responsibility and a strong desire to change reality, and he did so beyond the norms of the Temple and the society he belonged to. As *Luke* put it: “came where he was; he saw him, he had compassion; he bandaged his wounds; he set him; he took care of him...” (*Luke* 10: 30-36)

4. Learning experiences in local churches as engaging world narratives

Israel Flores Olmos

Things we don't talk about are deleted. They wanted to silence us, not to talk about, but we spoke and through the word we formed history.

1. OUR COMMUNITY.

Saint Paul's congregation of the Spanish Evangelical Church in Granada is a minority church community which finds itself on the margins of a wider traditional and very conservative society.

This community has faced a number of different challenges over the years. In addition to finding itself in a minority position and socially excluded in the history of Spain, the church's history has been marked by persecution and harassment by both civil and religious authorities. Now the situation has changed with a more tolerant political and social climate, yet the community continues to face great challenges as it interacts with different aspects of the world around it.

Just to be protestant in the middle of a traditional and conservative Catholic social environment, already raises questions about our identity as a community. Yet in a wider context with growing indifference to religion in society the church is seen as a community of the past having little relevance for certain groups in an increasingly secularized society.

In spite of this, our faith community has also transformed over the years. The number of young people and couples joining has increased and a sizable number of families from different backgrounds have integrated into its life, resulting in a community which is both diverse and adaptable. This diversity of people from both other regions of Spain and abroad has brought different perspectives on the world around us and we have together, as a community, through their experiences and understanding found new dimensions to our faith.

Thus, while the community is on the margins it is open to new experiences which make possible new opportunities for growth in our faith and life.

- As Protestants in a majority conservative catholic society, we find ourselves on the margins of the established spiritual framework and just our presence is questioned.
- As an intergenerational community, there are a number of people who are familiar with the traditional rhythms and forms of worship, which have historically shaped the life of the community, but now with the presence of a new generation there comes different expectations about what it means to be a worshipping community.
- As we have embraced the idea of being a multicultural group open to new comers from both other parts of Spain and other continents as Europe, Africa and Latin America, we have taken the first steps to becoming an intercultural community, learning from each other and being open to other forms of worship. (Our diversity becomes our strength.)
- The community is also challenged by the current economic situation generalized in southern countries of Europe. The elderly live on their increasingly smaller pensions. Young people find just temporary jobs. Arriving migrants survive with the support of ONG's.
- As a faith community, the congregation has a mix of people and although most come from protestant backgrounds, there are some who bring their own understanding of what it means to be a protestant. When they integrate into the community they, can find their traditional understanding challenged at both cultural and religious levels. Al that is conducive to "no-land" to religious-symbolic assets. It may lead to the deterritorialization of their symbolic-religious values.
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2. LIFE NARRATIVE AS A WAY OF EDUCATION.

It is in the middle of this context which we have just described that the task of education takes place within the daily life of the community. The telling of our stories and the sharing of our experiences enrich the community. This also helps to keep the community open to others and committed to its mission to promote the kingdom of God.

The encounter with the sacred in the Christian faith necessarily implies that we relate to each other, that is to say, the experience of faith is a human experience which each of us is able to relate to. These stories not only can be told but also need to be told. They are told within the community, where at the level of everyday life, the telling of our stories help keep faith alive.

The life narrative promotes the meaning, the history and the purpose of the community and brings hope to its members. Furthermore, it strengthens and affirms

the capacities and hopes of those who share their life narratives. Telling these narratives in an environment so diverse and pluralistic allows us to know each other better and sensitizes people to the various needs of those arriving in the community, but also to the needs of those already in the community. It helps to break down barriers, to create bonds of empathy and it challenges one another to greater levels of acceptance of faith.

We encourage and accompany those who will share their testimony to do so with a faith approach. This can be done with the help either of some Bible passages, some theological subjects or some community faith experiences (both from the places they come and from Granada). Furthermore we encourage them to share that testimony in a worship context, including profession of faith, baptism or birthday.

3. SMALL NARRATIVES OF LIVE.

PAQUITA “THE LITTLE” A INTERVIEW IN HER 80TH BIRTHDAY.

What beliefs and values you passed in your family?

At that time it was normal to be a Catholic, so I was. I liked to sing in the masses.

I remember the time of the Civil War. I was a well little, when one night my dad came bleeding from his face and torn shirt. My mother asked what had happened. Then he told us that the Falangists had threatened him and that he had discussed with them, nothing more. But because my dad was a friend of the father of the leader of the Falangists, never did anything, although my father was a socialist.

Do you remember your school days?

I attended primary school I a Carmelite convent school, I studied until 16 years old in there. My mother studied too in there but until her 19 years old. When I was on my 16, I did not more want to be in there and I told to my parents that I wanted to study Dressmaking.

Friendships? For many years I've been with Encarnita that was the one I shared the gospel. She invited me home Bible studies with Antonia Romero (my neighbor in Armilla).

What memories do you have with the world of work? What about retirement?

When I practiced in a fashion house, one of the important women who had many children come to my, and offered me a steady job. She wanted pay me a very good

salary, but I did not accept it, because I did not feel comfortable leaving the owner of the fashion house. Later I put a workshop for women. Many poor women learned to make clothes for their own families.

How do you use your free time, what their entertainment?

I write poems forever, but my work at sewing I could not devote to this hobby, until I retired. I have published five books of poetry, and in the presentation of the last one in the city of Armilla said Manuel Paredes (2008), the host of his latest book: "She changed from the needle to the pen and, began to string together words and compose poetry without patterns ". You know,

I think that we should be support to many women that want to expressed in artistic or handcrafts ways.

Paqui. I was a housemaid in Belgium and I stole a Bible .. now I the gift them. Testimony on the day of confirmation.

I am Paquita. I was born in Spain but I grew up in Belgium with my parents and my brothers. During 18 years I spent a few seasons between Spain and Belgium. In the place that I found work I went. When I got married, I live in Belgium and acquired a good economic position. I was very happy with my son.

But my husband decided to leave house. It was very hard to me. I was with my son and returned to Spain. My son started going to a church in Valencia. And he invited me to go with him, but I did not want to go. A lack of work in Spain, I went as housemaid to Belgium. I regained economic stability, but not emotional. The divorce was very difficult to me.

I was going to work in a house where there was a Bible, no one would read it and remembered what my son told me about it. I did not want to spend money on a Bible, so I decided to steal it. The Bible was the first complete book that I read, and I was very shocked. (After a few days I told the persons of the house that I had taken the Bible, but they said me that "no problem", they gave me) Today, after a few years I returned to Spain, I gave many Bibles. But also, I like to talk with women who are divorced and suffering from loneliness. I share my story with they, as I have already done, then together we encourage us to get on with our lives.

Lydia. "To read about women in the movement of Jesus has given me back my dignity".

I, my husband ours five daughter and two sons had arrived to Spain without nothing. Just we brought a suitcase with a blanket. In the Madrid's Airport we stopped several hours before letting us pass. We said we were coming just to a wedding, and that we will back to Chile in a month. Really I do not know how, but they let us pass.

We have eleven years in Spain, we were surviving, with a lot of work but we went ahead. One day my husband came back to Chile. So I was alone with my sons. My relationship with my husband was physical and emotionally abusive. With many kinds of humiliation from him to my. But I thought It was OK. Overall, the most valuable thing that I had, already been lost in one night.

Do you to believe? In Chile my mother told us that the virginity was the most valuable thing that a woman could has. So after having several sons, Can you imagine how I saw myself? But in the meetings of women in this church, when we read about women in the movement of Jesus, has given me back my dignity. Today I talk a lot with my daughters and I tell them that they have a great value in themselves. Today I will be baptized, I know that Jesus does not reject women. We can be his friends and colleagues and look us in our dignity.

Olivier. From Cameroon to Granada. A long road to finally be baptized. Testimony on the day of his baptism.

I left Cameroon because invited me a friend. There are thought to here all is well. That everybody have jobs and there are no problems here, we think. That's not true, I now realize. We do not have a good time on the road to Morocco

Then move to Melilla was also very difficult to us. We were hungry and thirsty. But finally I got to arrive "dry" to Spain. I had to catch a boat. The Red Cross helped me, but it still was not easy.

It's a lot of pain, and loneliness. I now live in the house of Red Cross for a year. I'm a volunteer, I quickly learned Spanish and I speak also English, French and other three languages of my country, so I've been invited to work with them. I keep waiting for my papers.

The road to Spain was not easy and even now has not been easy. I remember a few months ago I read the text of the Bible and do not understand. I asked if I could explain why that the people were baptized in the cloud (1 Cor 10). When I understood that, I

identified me with the people who was in the desert and also walked a lot. Now I understand that my road from Cameroon to Granda was like a baptized. As if I was in the desert with the people of Lord. My friend and I were.

4. DYNAMICS OF REFLECTION ON THE TESTIMONY.

The testimonies may seem insignificant, trivial, but it is not. Go down to micro history, family life and everyday concrete reality, it can identify with a lot of people that have this kind of experience every day.

5. The Fliedner Foundation

Experience in Diakonia and Learning

Pedro Zamora

In its origins, Fundación F. Fliedner was a generalist, not specialized mission. However, due to historical reasons, the Foundation ended up concentrating its actions on the education field, particularly at the school level (Kindergarden, Primary, Secondary and High School). Thus, a key question arises for those of us serving in it: how can we possibly link diaconal action and education, bringing together users (mostly students and their families plus their social web), administrative staff and educators? In short, what are we doing so that diakonia becomes a vital learning process for the whole of the Foundation?

I would like to advance a short answer summing up my exposition: we do diakonia in education, but we need to systematize our own diaconal and educational experience, reflect on it and above all we need to train our own personnel so that it embodies our diaconal and educational character. Therefore, one of the major challenges for the FFF today is its ability to shape visible diaconal and educational character not as two parallel actions, but as a whole.

1. Starting point: what we do (education in general and in particular).

Our education programs go from 0-16 years (Kindergarten, Primary and Secondary) serving to a total of 2,000 students, and we hope to offer High School to students from 16-18 years old. At college level, we only offer theological education (SEUT) to no more than 25 students. We also run a continuing education program (Taller Teológico) addressing the church lay adults (focus on theological education). We reckon that TT reaches to about 250 people. Finally, we provide (by outsourcing) continuous training to our own personnel, but focusing on different occupational/professional specialties.

At present, our pre-university educational action follows the curriculum set by the government, and our education programs have lost their own character or at least their distinctive profile has grown blurry in the last decades. In other words, we lack a pedagogical strategy stemming from our own vocation/mission, which is to say that we lack a very distinguished character. Our confessional character barely becomes a

visible expression in our school activities, except for some very particular ones (i.e., the religion program at one school, or an after-school Bible program at the other). It is true that our confession rejects all forms of indoctrination, particularly in Schools. Besides, we emphasize that religion ought to be a free expression of the individual convictions, so that religious education is a church and family responsibility. Moreover, we assure that our vocation is shown through the universal values taught to our students. Nonetheless, one suspects that underlying this lack of visible confessional traits, there is a lack of serious study of what to be a protestant diaconal school means.

In spite of this suspicion, it is true that our schools seek education renewal out of our diaconal vocation. Specifically they draw from the following sources:

- Cooperative learning
- Social-Emotional learning (SEL)
- Learning through music
- Bilingual / Trilingual learning
- Learning values through the ICT (Information & Communication Technologies)

Through these areas of renewal, we expect not only to improve our educational competence and competitiveness, but also to provide good and affordable education. For example, in 1998 we pioneered a bilingual curriculum addressed to all our students, when at that time these programs were offered only by elitist private schools. Public schools in Madrid have started running bilingual curricula five years ago.

1.1. Summing up this first point

We can say, therefore, that our two schools keep up alive the momentum of renewal, unceasingly nurtured, among others, by their Protestant character, even if their characteristic profile is not as well defined as it should. On the contrary, our adult education activities gathered around Campus Flieger (SEUT >> TT, CS&F, Publisher, Archive) have a very well defined profile and used to have a clear-cut addressee/audience (churches and church members), whereas now it is engaged in a process of opening up towards new addressees, i.e., the Foundation's personnel and educational and diaconal programs.

1.2. Limitations

I think that in the educational field we lack five important elements that need to be developed within our foundation:

- To shape a Philosophy of Education (Pedagogy, not just an educational program) out of our diaconal vocation and out of our confession. That is, we need to outline more explicitly how our theology articulates our pedagogy, and the other way around, how our educational action also shapes our theology (vocation).
- Out of 1, we need to develop a Pedagogy of Religion, defined by its diaconal character.
- Also we need to set up at least a post-graduate specialization in religious education and also in diakonia (SEUT).
- We ought to implement a new competence as part of our educational action: spiritual competence (we shall come back to this).
- Finally, we should engage our personnel in vocational training, in order to embody the character of the institution not so much as an obligation but as a personal fulfillment.

2. Diaconal Action

The Foundation diaconal work focuses on concrete actions within the framework of the schools' life. Among them, the following are the most relevant:

- A scholarship fund (€ 90,000) to aid families struggling to pay some school fees not subsidized by the state.
- A part-time social worker dedicated to meeting with the students' families and identify their needs, which in turn determines the allocation of scholarships.
- Total or partial financing of departments considered vital to our educational program. For example:
- Department of orientation (pedagogical department), which includes specialists in psychology, pedagogy and social education.
- Educational Leisure Programs: Support to students in extracurricular activities.
- Bilingualism for all: a program that began when bilingual education was only run by elitist private schools.
- Each center displays some specific supportive actions (eg twinning Juan de Valdes with a school in Ethiopia).

2.1. Summing up the second point

Similarly to what I said as a summary of point 1, I conclude that the FFF clearly takes its educational engagement as a diakonia, and that this understanding also comes from his Protestant identity, and more specifically from its identification (institutionally speaking) with the Social Gospel movement (whether conservative or liberal).

2.2. Limitations

Here I see several limitations that are actually in line with those found in our first point on the FFF educational action. We ought:

- To define our own diaconal model in accordance to our reality in order to meet the new challenges of today.
- Out of this, we should integrate our educational model with a diaconal model, so that this integration became a characteristic of our education programs. This would convey developing a diaconal competence as part of the required competences to all European schools.
- It would also convey to engage all our personnel into diaconic formation at different levels of responsibility (similar to 1.2).
- Finally, this would require running a specialty in diakonia at the graduate level.

2.3. Some general conclusions

My conclusions for both the educational action and the diaconal action, are in fact one and the same: The FFF needs to work out two areas:

- To define more explicitly the theoretical foundations of its diaconal and educational actions.
- To take this definition to its every-day programs, with an emphasis on training staff and users.

Why this emphasis on definition and training?

Because I think that since the late 90's we have moved, without noticing it, to a liminal situation. In my opinion, it is the first time that our Foundation finds itself *in limine* in a context of political and social stability, i.e., without intolerance and without repression.

Indeed, Spain is now a consolidated political democracy and has a social and economic structure more open than in the past two centuries. Therefore, the experience of plurality has cracked down the rigid imaginary or mental constructs of the past (gone by for good, I hope). But this new context requires from institutions like the Foundation itself, a kind of re-founding (a redundancy, by the way, very appropriate to my point):

Its origins were clear-cut: being an evangelical mission, its primary goal was to spread the Gospel by word (preaching) and action (diakonia) throughout a country, Spain, locked up to the world and whose population is subdued by its centuries-old religious and political powers.

Therefore, we can state that, originally, both the addressee of the mission and the main motivation to mission were clear-cut: they had a post-liminal form, that is, they were an indisputable referent for life and for action.

So much so, that the lack of social diversity of that time is reflected in the existence of very few distinct community self-reliant blocks independent of each other: each one of them would structure their own reality and would nurture its members, and to a certain point would do so against the other. In this context, one can say that preaching, to some extent, is used as ideological self-assertion, and that diakonia serves as an instrument community self-affirmation (consolidation).

On the other hand, it should be noted that in Europe, in late 19th century and early 20th century, mainline and established churches also experienced a kind of social and economic self-sufficiency that somehow determined their understanding of mission only as an action towards that one other which is different from myself / ourselves. To some extent, we can affirm that mission was also a way of self-affirmation and expansion over against the other.

Indeed, in that time the way of doing mission was based on the tight intertwining of "Spirituality-Congregation-Management" (HJ Abromeint), that is, mission was carried out on a strong spiritual experience, it was also strongly supported by a well-defined and committed community, and both, spirituality and community would power a strategic action without external references (self-sufficient management).

But as I said earlier on, this paradigm is now over in Europe, and the paradigm in Spain has also changed radically, aligning itself closely to the European modern context. Therefore, the context in which the Foundation carries its mission has changed, but it is important to realize that in addition to this, its internal reality has also changed dramatically. These two changes raise a serious questioning about how mission should be understood today, but basically I take this questioning as an opportunity to update our vocation.

3. Today's challenges to our diakonia

3.1. External changes: changes in the Spanish society in which we operate.

Today Spain is a fairly typical society of the 21st century:

- There is an increasing awareness of social diversity (also religious). Throughout, ideological and social fragmentation is visible versus the previous monolithic character of society.
- In fact, many social and political values held by liberal Protestantism, have been assumed by society (via Europe, not through direct Protestant influence). This raises questions about the social contributions of historical Spanish Protestantism (IEE).
- Education today is understood as necessarily open to ongoing innovation versus the former narrow understanding of education as an encapsulated system reflecting a monolithic society. Today, education is seen as a model for tomorrow's society rather than a reflection of the present.
- Marked division between the public /social) sphere and the private one (personal life), so Religion has been consigned to the sphere of private life. This versus the previous all-embracing religious (Catholic) worldview.
- Today (even if it is now under fire) we have a welfare state: social and health services and education are a fundamental universal right. Hence that many wonder about the role of diakonia (as part of church mission): is it an intrusion? Can or ought to be subsidiary to the state? Should it seek some kind of differentiation from the state?
- Something very new is the huge impact of ICT (Information and Communication Technologies), which open infinite existing worlds to each individual. Hence our difficulties to educate in common core values.
- Our constituency (our "congregation") is *de facto* socially integrated versus the former awareness of being a marginalized community.

This social and educational change is so radical in its depth and has become so stable over time, that we are caught offside: we welcome the new Spain, but we have failed to define which new roles should it play our confessional diakonia. Something you must take into account to understand this, is that history has been harsh on Spanish Protestantism, to the point of being eradicated from the Spanish noble and religious circles in which it took root (16th century), and whose reconstruction from 1860 onwards has been subject to long periods of intolerance and persecution seasoned with brief periods of freedom, except for the period beginning with Franco's death in 1975, that can be considered consolidated by mid 90's onwards. Otherwise said, our Foundation has never enjoyed of an adequate atmosphere to think through what it does and how it does it, and therefore it was neither able to implement its conclusions through its projects. It is only now, in the last 15 years, that we have become aware of

the new paradigm we live in, which in turn demands to revisiting our mission and the way we operate. And this is why we turn now to inner changes in the FFF.

3.2. Internal changes in the Foundation

Given the particular history of Spanish Protestantism, it can be said that the history of the Foundation has been permanently marked by its struggle for survival, whether against social repression and / or against political or economic instability. Only after 1998 we can speak of self-sufficiency, which, coupled with the consolidation of the democratic sociopolitical changes, becomes a radical turning point in the history of the Foundation.

Self-sustainability is important because it means that the fate/destiny of the Foundation is in its own hands (leaving aside theological considerations, of course). Furthermore, overcoming economic instability for the first time raises the possibility of raising critical questions about the mission and its pursuit. And these critical questions make even more sense when one realizes that, in a latent and unnoticed way, the structure/triad Spirituality-Congregation-Management has fallen apart. For example, in the last two decades personnel has been hired based on professional criteria without considering necessarily any link with our congregation or our spirituality. Therefore, we have substantially improved our management capacity, but our role as diakonia of the church for the church and for society has become itself blurred. I'm not saying this role has disappeared, but I do say that for many it is difficult to recognize it, and I do say that we have so far failed to spell out our mission in relationship to what we do.

Out of this, some questions arise at several levels:

3.3. Questions at a fundamental level.

- Do we need today in Spain, a Protestant diakonia? If not, is there still a mission for the Foundation itself?
- If yes, how? As a subsidiary agency to government's actions and projects or as a fundamental service to society? These questions arise others: For example, should our diakonia be based on universal ethics or, in addition, must it meet a demand from the Gospel? Put in another way, should our diakonia be a token of real love to our neighbor or, in addition, should it aspire to be a sample of evangelical (Gospel) brotherhood? We might even put it this way: would the absence of a diakonia as an expression of this evangelical fraternity convey a fundamental lost in philanthropy or would not?

3.4. Questions at a constructive level (if we go ahead with a protestant diakonia)

- In a context of social responsibility (public and private, eg. CSR), which is the decisive contribution of a protestant / evangelical diakonia? Ought to be strictly spiritual? Basically material? Perhaps the full integration of the two would be its particular contribution? (I am inclined to this).
- Given the current great development of professional specializations in the educational and economic-social (third sector, social economy), how can / should these be incorporated by a diakonia? Asked otherwise, how can contribute a Christian diakonia to a better performance of these specs / specializations / professions?
- In the educational setting, highly intervened by the Spanish government, which still shows strong distrust towards its civil society, how can we built our character into our educational programs?

4. Conclusion: the FFF major challenge

The above questions reveal, as I said earlier on, that we are now in a liminal situation because of the dramatic external and internal changes that blur the previous clear cut definition of our vocation, also making its daily pursuit far more complex.

In 2006 the Board of the Foundation made a sort of ideological catch-up exercise rewriting its mission statement (see Addendum). It will be clear to any reader that there are two outstanding words and concepts: its diaconal character and also its interest in intertwining diakonia with spirituality.

In my opinion, the FFF has identified its major challenge to be faced:

- Spirituality is a 'vital dimension' and as such embraces the whole of human complexity (diakonia, education, etc..) bearing also the capacity to draw together social 'fragmentation' and plurality with convictions / vocations deeply felt.
- At the same time, we speak of spiritual competence in order to measure its real impact on our actions.

In other words, our challenge is that our diakonia is certainly marked by a spirituality that stamps its mark in in everything we are and do as Foundation. Otherwise, its vocation as a diakonia should be amended to become a social organization.

6. The Church of Hope; cult and liturgy as a place of learning

Alma Hernandez

Summary

The ecclesiastic areas, are symbolic spaces, spaces that define creative boundaries (liminal), contradictorily, these ecclesial areas have been converted for many as "no places". The aim for some of our churches, in nowadays, is to recuperate those places and convert them into communication spaces, creative spaces, (in other words): learning spaces, constant usage places. We will analyze a model of the bicultural Church and we will detect their efforts, difficulties and achievements, transforming the ecclesial area into content usage places.

Welcome to the Church of Hope. Hoping that today's conference can be converted into a "liminal" space of learning, in which we will get to know the ecclesial model of the Church of Hope, that are converting those "liminal spaces" into creative learning spaces, into a living area.

We will review the origins and characteristics of the Church of Hope, opportunities and challenges of a liminal Church, cult function and the liturgy as a learning space.

Theological work areas in the Church of Hope. A brief conclusion of the learning areas that can be worked on a liminal Church.

1. The Spanish Evangelical Church (IEE)

The Church of Hope (IE) belongs to the Evangelical Church of Spain (IEE). This was formed with the union of different protestant traditions, Europeans as much as Americans to a lesser extent. The Evangelical Church of Spain fully identifies itself with the Protestant Reformation, historically, theologically and confessionally, which has been recognized reformed and evangelically ecumenical. Its government is presbyterian-synod: local churches meet up at the General Assembly, composed of delegates of the respective congregations, that form the Evangelical Church of Spain (IEE) and Ministers who serve in the same, have their origin in the XIX century, in the

era of religious tolerance that was implanted in Spain, in the wake of the revolution in September 1868. Therefore, the Evangelical Church of Spain (IEE) represents Spain in the historic Protestantism.

2. The Church of Hope: Past and present.

a) Background: In the pews of the Church of Jesus.

The Church of Hope (IE) is born within the churches of the Evangelical Church of Spain (IEE) in the Presbytery of Madrid.

The decade of the 80s is a significant moment in the life of the Church of Jesus (Calatrava street): A group of Equatoguineans reached their pews, for study reasons.

b) A Hispanic-African Mission.

The arrival of these young believers brought a fraternal coexistence, taking up over the years their residence on the outskirts of Madrid, in the neighbourhoods of Móstoles, Fuenlabrada and Alcorcón. It was necessary to have a place of worship in that area. The newcomers could not meet during the week in the Church of Jesus (IJ) because they didn't have economy resources; coupled with this, some Spanish families of this church, accepted the challenge of starting a new job in that area. And so, in 1984, under the initiative of the, then, minister of the Church of Jesus (IJ), Pablo García, with the Spanish families and those young Equatoguineans, meetings were started in the Toledo Street, subsequently moving to Mexico street in the neighbourhood. In the first stage, they had the support of the United Evangelical Seminary (SEUT), which participated by sending students to preside over the worship.

c) In Paseo de Goya Street, Móstoles.

Years after, the church could have their own premises and on the 3 March 2001, celebrated their inauguration cult in Paseo de Goya Street, in the same neighbourhood of Móstoles, where we are at present. Now, there is an average of fifty people, to which must be added, those attending special celebrations.

In the twenty seven years existence of this community, there have been difficulties: changes of premises, internal conflicts, changes of ministers, poor economy, constant mobility of the members etc... Some of the ones that have been from the very beginning, still continue, other have gone; new members have arrived from various

latitudes. However, with all the diversity that this church represents, highlights the fact that all who have passed through this community: Hispanics and Africans, share the common context of having lived in some way or another a particular Exodus; an experience of expulsion or departure, in which leaving countries, communities and people who were dear to them, have come to find other in the ecclesial community.

3. The Church of Hope, a liminal church.

a) The Móstoles Neighbourhood.

As you have been able to see, the Móstoles neighbourhood, where the church is situated, in the extra-radius of the Capital of Madrid, with limitations that this entails in terms of opportunities for work, service quality, education quality, condition of dormitory towns (for example, children must return home by themselves because of the work of the adults in far neighbourhoods).

b) A Bicultural Church.

80% of its population (African immigrants) belong to a culture in minority and sometimes, social exclusion. The other 20%, is Spanish origin. As a bicultural Church, we are constantly working in the cultural boundaries of the two populations as discussed below.

4. A Question of Horizons.

Here, we will characterize living in the Church of Hope, the African horizon (Equatorial Guinea, Cameroon) and the Hispanic horizon (Spain and Latin-America):

The Hispanic population:

Founder of the church project:

The Hispanic people are a part of this community and they arrived because of two main reasons. Some arrived to backup the church project on the outskirts of Madrid. Others have been added in the middle of their particular exodus, looking for a household of faith.

Religious Origin

reformed

catholic

Worldview

Family concept

For the Hispanic population, the family occupies a very important place, so this is why Sunday Lunch with the family is an important institution.

The kinship model type is nuclear (father-mother-sons-daughters) and extended to (grandparents, uncles, aunts, cousins...)

The education of the children, including time at church, is the parents' responsibility.

Language and Culture

The Hispanic population values the capability of being able to participate in the cult from their culture and mother tongue. Bustos and Guiora give us the reasons:

«So, the language is therefore in first place, action: representation of reality and the transmission of that representation to our fellows, in a type of important linguistic action» (Bustos, 2011)

«Speaking, especially that of the mother tongue, is a powerful dimension of self-representation. It is one of the frontiers of that identity that separates us from the rest, asserting our individuality, at the same time, while linking us with those belonging to our own identified groups, such as family, religion, nationality, etc...» (Guiora, 1981)

This is the same for all cultures

Music and Liturgical gestures

Music among the reformed Spanish, has a role in maintaining the historical memory, which occurs mainly through hymns. Body expressions are limited, there is no dance, no clapping, but yes there are gestures of brotherly hugs and kisses.

Concept of time

Concept of time is lineal and corresponds to western thought. Hispanic people prefer a brief cult, and to know how long it lasts beforehand. The cults of the Church of Hope, lasts for two hours.

The Guinean population

Reasons for emigration and immigration

Because of Studies

Because of political asylum

To better their conditions of life.

Religious origin

The reformed church of Guinea

The reformed church of Cameroon

Worldview

Is built on three pillars:

The sense-feeling of community:

«Being human, is to belong to the community, and this implies participating in its beliefs, ceremonies and rituals. No one can break away from the religion of their group; doing this would mean separation from one's roots and foundation, its own security context, of their kindred and all groups formed by making one aware of their own existence» (Mbiti, 1996).

This is one of the main reasons of the deep association that the African establish with the church community, where they relate in community and hardly ever individually.

The religious sense of existence:

«Faith seems indispensable and that fully covers the entire space of the person as such, for the African the whole atmosphere and all the time should be occupied by a

religious meaning of life, so that in all times and places, the person feels safe enough to act with a meaningful religious conscience» (Mbiti, 1996).

This way we can affirm, that the African ontology is religious.

Sense of time:

For the African concept, time is a phenomenon in two dimensions a long past, a present, and virtually no future. When the Africans calculate time, they do it with a specific purpose, in connection with events, time governed by events. For example, if an African tells you that he/she will see you tomorrow morning this can mean, from when the sun rises until before lunch.

Relationship maps:

African kinship is linear in nature, so that the children of the same generation are considered brother-sisters, even if they are from different mother uterine. For example, wanting to know, who the mother of a young girl, I was asked on various occasions different women. First they looked at me in amazement, afterwards they responded –she is everybody's. It cost me a lot of observation, to find out who the biological mother of the girl was.

Music and Dance:

Music is extremely important in the African horizon, and it is expressed primarily through choral groups. Chants, dance, choreography and the use of autochthonous instruments, are loaded with symbolism. The main function is the transmission of faith and religious education.

Language:

For the African population, the participation in the cult in their tongue (fang-fang mbulu) is absolute. In the cult, there is a space in which one can spontaneously participate through readings and songs. Special liturgical participations: The Church of Hope choir.

5. Opportunities and challenges in a liminal church

We do not want to deny natural tensions in a church where constantly it is necessary to cross borders, However, it is the will of the community to work with «disadvantages» and convert them into learning spaces.

Language: The Church of Hope, must continue working in administrating the participation of different languages that are spoken in the church, this way, everybody can understand what we pray, what we sing, etc...in another language different to one's own

Music: work the respect for the different styles of music

Food (meals): respect the decision as much as the one who participates as the one abstaining from certain food

Concept of Time: recognize different conceptions about the sense of time

Body: follows fomenting respect for free participation in the liturgical gestures

The physical Space: Maintenance and care of the physical space

6. The focus of worship in the Church of Hope, from a sociological perspective:

- a) Construction (building) of the person
- b) Development of the fraternal affection
- c) Respect and dignity of the person
- d) The sense of the Christian Community

7. Liturgy as a place of learning, our theological approach:

We learn to accept cultural diversity (community)

We learn respect for differences (plurality)

Learn the care that we should lavish for each other (pastoral)

Learn to participate, recognizing the state of things is a community responsibility (community priesthood)

Learn to serve one another, preserving the dignity of everyone (diakonia)

From the worship (cult), we are building real community spaces, Ecclesial spaces that are truly practiced spaces.

The Church of Hope, is converting its liturgy into a creative space:

It has opened real space for bicultural participation: songs, readings...

It permits the participation of mother tongues

It has designed a three month programme where all assistants have the opportunity to participate in the worship, for example, some people are learning to read in this space

The celebration of the sacrament is done in mixed circles as a symbol of the ethnic frames overflow

Fraternal mixed meals are a sign of will to live together despite tensions.

The diakonia is lived as a part of the worship to God, solidarity towards life's partner, with singing, partake of the sacrament and the fight for inequality is not perpetuated as a rule of life.