Respect for people and their cultures in our modern world
Introducing VIVAT International

VIVAT International was founded in 2000 by the Society of the Divine Word (SVD) and the Missionary Sisters Servants of the Holy Spirit (SSpS) as an organization to lobby in favour of the poor, the marginalized and for the protection of creation at the United Nations. Since 2005, ten other congregations joined the original founders of VIVAT. Many are well known in Ireland and include the Spiritans (CSSp), the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate (OMI), the Little Sisters of the Assumption (LSA), the Missionary Sisters of the Holy Rosary (MSHR), Comboni Missionaries of the Sacred Heart (MCCJ), Priests of the Sacred Heart of Jesus (SCJ), and the Religious of the Assumption (RA).

With a very wide distribution of congregations, it can be said that VIVAT has its finger on the pulse of the issues of the poor and marginalized worldwide. It is also a powerful voice as it is geared to bring their agenda to an international audience through lobbying on concrete issues presented by member congregations at the UN. How does it do this? VIVAT’s first strength is indeed in having access to the people its members are working with and their issues. It has also put an infrastructure in place to ensure effective international lobbying. VIVAT opened and staffed a UN office in New York shortly after its foundation. In 2009 it opened another office in Geneva, Switzerland, home of the UN’s Human Rights Council and numerous international human rights groups. Other offices at regional level are being considered.

Since early 2011, representatives of the congregations of VIVAT in Ireland have been meeting to focus on issues which will be prepared for lobbying at the United Nations by VIVAT.
Introduction

The partner missionary congregations in VIVAT are each international, both in terms of the countries where they work and in the many and diverse cultures from which they draw their members. Living in culturally mixed communities and working among diverse peoples helps to change perspectives and develop the broader and more positive understanding of the issues that is often missing from increasingly polarized debates on refugees, migrants, cultural diversity and the challenges of making room within host cultures for other peoples.

These congregations have been learning from the challenges encountered on the path to developing intercultural communities, and have been coming to appreciate diversity as a gift when the journey is undertaken creatively and in faith.

In his keynote address to their General Chapter some weeks ago, for example, the Superior General of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate observed that where Oblate communities include members from different cultures, and are creatively working with their diversity, they tend to have a clearer missionary identity. On the other hand, mono-cultural communities risk turning in on themselves… ‘and losing our missionary spirit and identity when we close our minds and hearts to the richness of other cultures’.

And at their General Chapter in 2005, the Little Sisters of the Assumption noted prophetically that, “in the context of increasing mobility of peoples, of forced displacements, we are immersed in multi-cultural and multi-religious realities. This becomes a daily call for us to grow in solidarity and urges us to bring about new relationships… To search for ways to overcome the barriers between peoples, cultures and religions in a movement of openness, dialogue and faith.”

The four reflections offered in this booklet emerge from a shared conviction that Christians and all who believe in the dignity and value of human life have their part to play in exploring positive paths towards a fruitful interculturality which respects all that is unifying and life affirming in diverse cultures.

An astronaut gazing back from space on Planet Earth, his home, sees “… a light, delicate blue sphere laced with slowly swirling veils of white’. It is a unique perspective that not only evokes feelings of love and gratitude for
creation, it reawakens one to the unity and interconnectedness of all that exists, and shows the futility of all divisions and wars between peoples.

The human quest to belong, to be at home with nature and people, is explored in the second reflection. We belong together based on the shared culture of the human heart.

At its core the human story is one that is shared across cultures and religions. We are, all of us, daughters and sons of the one God. It is a story that is best heard in culturally mixed groups, in prayer, dialogue and working together with shared symbols.

Pope Francis’ visits to refugee camps and his clear love and concern for suffering people, like a contemporary telling of the story of the ‘Good Samaritan’, challenge us to open our hearts in love and humility to all people in need.

A missionary who has worked for 40 years on development projects in a predominantly Islamic country spoke recently of his conviction that ‘dialogue in action’ — working together to improve the lives of poor people solely on the basis of need — is the only effective way. The validity of this approach was underscored for him months earlier when well-funded radical Islamists attempted to gain a foothold in the region and were rejected by the Islamic communities.

Indeed it is clear that with each outrage committed in the name of Allah, the great majority of Muslims are shocked at what is happening to the faith they love and that sustains them. Speaking on BBC radio on the morning after the shootings in Paris, Muslim academic Dr Mona Siddiqui said, ‘Unless we are active in defending all that is good in our faith, there will be no faith to defend. With each attack Islam will not weaken the West, but it will hollow out the Muslim faith just that little bit more.’

We hope that these short reflections will encourage readers to open paths to friendship and encounter with people from other cultures.
One Earth – Our Home

“May they all be one”
Leader: As we gather to reflect and pray on the theme of Interculturality - that is, our desire to acknowledge, respect and live with peoples of diverse cultures - we initially celebrate the mystery of life within which we as human beings live, move and share a common origin.

Edwin Hubble who died in 1953 studied the complex nature of our universe and discovered the existence of many galaxies beyond our own galaxy, the Milky Way. The Hubble Telescope, named after him, was launched in 1990 and continues as a Space-based observatory to orbit our Earth and record high-resolution images. These images are leading to ongoing breakthroughs in our understanding of our Mysterious Universe and indeed of our place within it.

Astronauts have also shared their experiences of Space travel. They have revealed extraordinary images and insights as they recorded their travels and saw Planet Earth from their Space ships. Let us listen to what some of them have said:

“Suddenly, from behind the rim of the Moon, in long, slow-motion moments of immense majesty, there emerges a sparkling blue and white jewel, a light, delicate sky-blue sphere laced with slowly swirling veils of white, rising gradually like a small pearl in a thick sea of black mystery. It takes more than a moment to fully realize this is Earth...home.”

Edgar Mitchel

“As you pass from sunlight into darkness and back again every hour and a half, you become startlingly aware how artificial are the thousands of boundaries we’ve created to separate and define. And for the first time in your life you feel in your gut the precious unity of the Earth and of all the living things it supports.”

Russell ‘Rusty’ Schweikart, returning from Apollo 9

“For those who have seen the Earth from space, and for the hundreds and perhaps thousands more who will, the experience most certainly changes your perspective. The things that we share in our world are far more valuable than those which divide us.”

Donald Williams
Leader: The quotations from these astronauts, together with the wisdom of mystics, theologians and artists are calling us to reflect on our shared and sacred origins. We are becoming aware of the unity of the universe, the shared story of all species, the interconnected existence within all Creation. As we reflect on this bigger picture we are invited to live as ONE.

OPENING PRAYER

Loving God, Creator of all that is good, give us the imagination and insight that is needed for our time.

May we call forth, nurture and sustain each other through our daily interactions.

May we experience your transforming power in our lives and communities so that we may be channels of your peace, bringing love where there is hatred, pardon where there is injury and light where there is darkness.

This prayer we make through Jesus, your Son and our Brother, Amen.
For everyone born, a place at the table,
for everyone born, clean water and bread,
a shelter, a space, a safe place for growing,
for everyone born, a star overhead.

And God will delight
when we are creators of justice and joy.
Yes, God will delight
when we are creators of justice, justice and joy!

For woman and man, a place at the table,
revising the roles, deciding the share,
with wisdom and grace, dividing the power,
for woman and man a system that’s fair.

For young and for old, a place at the table,
a voice to be heard, a part in the song,
the hands of a child in hands that are wrinkled,
for young and for old, the right to belong.

For just and unjust,
a place at the table,
abuser, abused,
with need to forgive,
in anger, in hurt,
a mindset of mercy,
for just and unjust,
a new way to live.

For everyone born,
a place at the table,
to live without fear,
and simply to be,
to work, to speak out,
to witness and worship,
for everyone born,
the right to be free.
PSALM 115
(Paraphrased by Christine Robinson)

O Great Mystery
We love and praise you without understanding.

You are not a little tin god
    with eyes that do not see and ears that do not hear
    and a mouth that does not speak.
You cannot be described or boxed up or tamed
    You are beyond our understanding.

Still, we yearn to hear you, know you,
    feel your love, and in mystery, we do.
We know awe at the intricate majesty of the heavens,
We cherish the work of caring for each other
    and the Earth.

We praise you, Great Mystery,
    All the days of our lives.

REFLECTIONS

To awaken universal appreciation of peoples and cultures
Pause for silence after each reading. Allow participants to share on a word or quotation that touches them.

Rumi (1207-1273AD)
(Islamic scholar, theologian, and Sufi mystic)

“There are hundreds of ways to kneel
    and kiss the ground”

“Words are a pretext.
    It is the inner bond that draws
    one person to another, not words.

“Out beyond the ideas of wrong doing and right doing,
    there is a field. I will meet you there.”
Bishop Joseph Shanahan C.S.Sp. (1871-1943AD) Founder of the Congregation of the Missionary Sisters of The Holy Rosary

“But Oh! The wretched thing life would be if we had nobody to love – nobody to return our love, nobody to share with us our joys and sorrows, our work, our very life. Now God has given us all those good things along with love and along with Himself, to love and to be loved.”

“Be known by your unity and charity as the early Christians were known: “See how they love one another.”

Satish Kumar (1936-) Editor Emeritus of The Resurgence Trust, an educational charity registered in England and Wales.

“Before we are American, Russian, Chinese, or Japanese, Christian or Muslim, Hindu or Buddhist, black or white, we are members of one human tribe and one Earth community.”

Dogen Zengi (1200-1253AD) Japanese Buddhist priest, writer, poet, philosopher. Founder of Soto School of Zen in Japan

“A fool sees himself as another, but a wise man sees others as himself.”


“Your fellow man is your mirror. If your own face is clean, the image you perceive will also be flawless. But should you look upon your fellow man and see a blemish, it is your own imperfection you are encountering…”

“The world is new to us every morning – this is God’s gift.”

Baha’u’llah ((1817-1892AD) Founder of the Baha’i Faith

“Ye are the fruits of one tree, and the leaves of one branch. Deal ye one with another with the utmost love and harmony, with friendliness and fellowship. He Who is the Daystar of Truth beareth Me witness! So powerful is the light of unity that it can illuminate the whole earth.”

“The earth is but one country, and mankind its citizens.”
PRAYER OF INTERCESSION:

Loving God, the images from our Universe are awe-inspiring and full of mystery. Fill us with a sense of wonder and gratitude for the gift of Life. May we always promote life in our interactions with one another.

Grant, Lord, that we may see.

Loving God, the story of Your Love unfolds in all of Your Creation. Give us eyes to see lovingly, not arrogantly, the many expressions of Your Love in the cultures of our world.

Grant, Lord, that we may see.

In our lives each day we are challenged by the stories that exclude rather than include, that divide rather than unite. Give us eyes to see and ears to hear so that we may respond to the invitations that foster interculturality.

Grant, Lord, that we may see.

Loving God, our conditioning by nationality, class, caste, tradition, religion and family customs can often hinder our ability to be open and trusting of others. Remind us again of Your Promise: “I will give you a new heart, and put a new spirit in you” (Ezek 36:26) May we be open to new ways of living in harmony in our world today.

Grant, Lord, that we may see.

We thank you for the artists, mystics, policy-makers and community leaders who work ceaselessly to build unity between tribes, peoples and nations. May their commitment to intercultural living and understanding inspire us all.

Grant, Lord, that we may see.

Give us the desire and the commitment to build creative intercultural communities so that we may taste the fruits of your Kingdom in the now of our lives.

Grant, Lord, that we may see.
**FINAL PRAYER:**

God of All Creation, as we experience the power and majesty of our Universe, we cherish our precious Earth and all species on it. May our shared stories enable us to celebrate the many expressions of diversity that exist in our lives and circumstances. Help us to respect that which is life-giving and nourishing. May we become aware of those aspects of religious, social and cultural conditioning that no longer serve justice and peace. May we challenge that which impedes or destroys the human spirit. Deepen our awareness of our one humanity and of our oneness with all of Earth’s family. May we come to respond with hope to the dream of all religions: “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you”. We make this prayer through the power of Your Holy Spirit and in Jesus’ name.

Amen.

**FINAL HYMN:**

We are one in the Spirit (Peter Scholte) https://youtu.be/xGD_BFSf90c

We are one in the Spirit, we are one in the Lord
We are one in the Spirit, we are one in the Lord
And we pray that all unity may one day be restored
And they’ll know we are Christians by our love, by our love
They will know we are Christians by our love

We will work with each other, we will work side by side
We will work with each other, we will work side by side
And we’ll guard each one’s dignity and save each one’s pride
And they’ll know we are Christians by our love, by our love
They will know we are Christians by our love

We will walk with each other, we will walk hand in hand
We will walk with each other, we will walk hand in hand
And together we’ll spread the news that God is in our land
And they’ll know we are Christians by our love, by our love
They will know we are Christians by our love

**CALL TO ACTION:**

Become more aware of interculturality by organizing and/or attending an intercultural event which celebrates diversity in your home town, parish, school or community.
Our human quest for belonging
Leader: As we gather today to continue our reflections on Interculturality we will learn that, regardless of the diversity of cultures, there is one underlying culture which cuts through difference and diversity and should enable us all to find common ground. It is the culture of the human heart. The human heart in all cultures seeks to share, to belong, to be one with nature, with all of creation and especially with all of humanity.

OPENING SONG

A Language Of The Heart

Kathy Sherman, CSJ

I do not speak your native tongue
I do not know your ways
Your customs, your creed,
the thing that you believe
I never learned.

Your skin’s a different color
And God has a different name
It’s easy to see how someone could believe
That you and I, we’re not the same.
But then I saw you smiling as the sun rose in the sky
And I saw the tears you wept as you watched your loved one die.
And when I heard your children singing,
they sounded much like mine
Somehow I knew we weren’t that different after all.

There is a language of the heart we all can understand.
That reaches cross the boundaries, of all people and all lands.
The deepest things we know by heart when all is said and done.
It’s a language of the heart can make us friends, can make us one.

I dream of peace and harmony
I imagine days to come
When war disappears and friendship draws near
To bind up age-old wounds.
I’ve heard that love changes everything
I believe that it’s true, don’t you?
If I reach out my hand, will you take it?
Then let’s stand for all that’s right and just and true.

Because I saw you smiling as the sun rose in the sky
And I saw the tears you wept as you watched your loved one die
And when I heard your children singing, they sounded just like mine
And then I knew we weren’t that different after all.

There is a language of the heart we all can understand
That reaches cross the boundaries, of all peoples and all lands.
The deepest things we know by heart when all is said and done
It’s a language of the heart can make us friends, can make us one.

**Excerpts from General Chapter Documents 2005/2011 of the Congregation of the Little Sisters of the Assumption**

“...The invitation to go towards what is different, to the encounter with other cultures is rooted in the biblical experience of Abraham, of Ruth and of the Apostles. In today’s context we wish to live the same spiritual journey which involves taking risks and of being radical, and the same prophetic way of universal community.......”

Our era is marked by the displacement of peoples which produces a mingling of cultures. It is an opportunity for encounter but also carries the risk that even greater ‘barriers’ may be erected. We are already composed of different cultures but another culture is being born, one which we cannot yet name. We are entering into a new way of understanding both the universe and the place of the human being in it.”
Reflection taken from the writings of Francis Libermann, founder of the Spiritans:

He sent a message of encouragement in January 1844 to his small missionary group in Cape Palmas, Liberia, who were experiencing much hardship, sickness and death at the time:

“Love one another. What will you ever achieve without peace and unity in your community? Therefore show that the spirit of Jesus Christ is really among you by your perfect union and mutual affection. Bear with each other’s faults of character and imperfections. Be for one another a source of consolation in the love of Jesus Christ.”

[A Spiritan Anthology 2011, pp. 150-154].

Extract from a message of Pope Francis to the World Humanitarian Summit held in Turkey in May 2016 in which he stresses what prevents communion from happening and what is needed today:

“We cannot deny that many interests today prevent solutions to conflicts and that military, economic and geopolitical strategies displace persons and peoples and impose the god of money, the god of power. At the same time, humanitarian efforts are frequently conditioned by commercial and ideological constraints.

For this reason, what is needed today is a renewed commitment to protect each person in their daily life and to protect their dignity and human rights; their security and their comprehensive needs. At the same time, it is necessary to preserve freedom and the social and cultural identity of peoples; without this leading to instances of isolation. It should also favor cooperation, dialogue, and especially peace.”

Pause for Reflection:

What are these messages saying to us?
BEATITUDES FOR SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT:

Blessed are you,
When you remain available,
sharing in simplicity what you possess.

Blessed are you,
When you creatively devise new ways of
donating your possessions, your time,
your tenderness and your gems of hope.

Blessed are you,
When you listen with your heart
to detect what is gift to others.

Blessed are you,
When you strive to take the first step,
the necessary one to attain peace with brothers and sisters
throughout the world.

Blessed are you,
When you keep in your heart wonderment,
openness and free questioning of life.

Blessed are you,
When you take seriously your faith in the God
who is the provider of all that we have.

[Louise Helene Renou in ‘Spirituality and Poverty
in a Land of Plenty’ 2004 (adapted)]
We pray together

[each of the four prayers are said in turn by different speakers]

1. Lord, may your Spirit be at work within each one of us and among us -
   
   **All:** So that we can build a community of justice and peace together.

2. Lord, may our working and living together be marked by good relationships grounded in mutual respect -
   
   **All:** So that we can bear witness to the possibility of true human community.

3. Lord, may we be open to new ideas and include others in all that we do -
   
   **All:** So that those among whom we live will find hospitality and a welcome in our homes and in our hearts.

4. Lord, always keep our minds fixed on the “bigger picture” so that we may see that life on earth is about building community between all peoples -
   
   **All:** So that all may participate in the good things of God’s creation with each one’s human dignity respected.
As Children of One God we pray:

Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be your name
in all the people of this country and across the world; be they peoples of
different races, colours and religions; whether they be in places of work,
in families and religious communities; in centres of study, hospitals or
places of refuge.

Your kingdom come
More and more in the hearts of those who work in your name;
who know you least and who have no hope.

Your will be done on earth, as it is in heaven
In the hearts of saints and sinners and of those who have an abundance
from which to give to the hungry, the sick, the uneducated, the
homeless and the unemployed.

Give us this day our daily bread
especially to the poor at home and to the poor across the world.
Let it be the bread of truth for this disturbed world.

And forgive us our trespasses
Our coldness, our constant failure to reach out to those
who are in need.

As we forgive those who trespass against us,
and lead us not into temptation
Give us the grace to resist the temptation to judge; the temptation to
arrogance and superiority; the temptation to fear failure; the temptation
to selfishness, to a closed mind.
But deliver us from evil
Of racial injustice, of war and of violence, the evil of failing in affection, respect and support for those who live and work with us. Deliver us from the evil of turning away from one another and from you,

Amen.

We conclude our reflection on the Human Quest for Belonging as we began, with words of Pope Francis addressed to the World Humanitarian Summit:

“Leaving no one behind” and “doing one’s very best” demands that we do not give up and that we take responsibility for our decisions and actions regarding the victims themselves. First of all, we must do this in a personal way, and then together, coordinating our strengths and initiatives, with mutual respect for our various skills and areas of expertise, not discriminating but rather welcoming. In other words: there must be no family without a home, no refugee without a welcome, no person without dignity, no wounded person without care, no child without a childhood, no young man or woman without a future, no elderly person without a dignified old age.”

ACTION

What can you do to promote the dignity, safety and well-being of others?
We are

all one with our

basic human needs

Week 3
INTRODUCTION

This week we acknowledge that there is a deep level of consciousness in everyday events. God is present in all religions and none. We know that we all have more or less the same needs when it comes to surviving and we know that it is important for us to be able to connect with other human beings in order to survive together.

Leader:  Let us pray

God of all religions and God of all human beings, help us to follow the example and teaching of your Son, Jesus Christ, so that by sharing His love with others, we can give glory and honour to You through the power of Your Holy Spirit.

In doing so may we behave with integrity, love, compassion and above all with humility. May we overcome all arrogance, condescension and disparagement in our heart.

Amen.
Hymn:

All things bright and beautiful
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FT_oDqOEGpc

Refrain: All things bright and beautiful
All creatures great and small,
All things wise and wonderful
The Lord God made them all.

Each little flower that opens
Each little bird that sings
He made their glowing colours~
He made their tiny wings

The purple headed mountain
The rivers running by
The sunset and the morning
That brightens up the sky

The cold wind in the winter
The pleasant summer sun
The ripe fruits in the garden
He made them every one

The tall trees in the greenwood
The meadows for our play
The rushes by the water
To gather every day

He gave us eyes to see them
And lips that we may tell
How great is God Almighty
Who has made all things well.
Let us listen to a quotation from Sr Franziska Carolina Rehbein SSpS:

“The historical Kairos, that we find ourselves in today, is the Kairos of encounter and dialogue between Christianity and other religions, as well as between diverse cultures. If there is to be a new vision of humankind, it can be born of this plurality and universal dialogue whose leaven and catalyst is the Gospel. Today more than ever we have to collaborate with all people of goodwill to bring about the utopia of a society that images the Trinitarian Mystery”.

(ref: At the heart of our Identity).

Psalm 133
(from Psalms Now)

O God how precious it is for us and how pleasing must it be for You when your children and servants learn how to live and work in unity!

It is in the measure that we do this that we begin to resemble You and to carry out more effectively Your purposes in our disjoined and discordant world.

Come let us bless His name together, rejoice in His loving concern for us, declare His worth to all creatures, and walk in obedience to His will.

The same God made heaven and earth and all of us who dwell here. Let us worship and serve him together.
**Story:**
**Bread as a Bond of Communion!**

**Reader:** In the city of Birmingham, a former chaplain from the Women’s Hospital said it was ‘the best event of its kind that he ever experienced’. What was he referring to? He was referring to an occasion when people of different cultures and faiths came together to make and bake bread. The idea was able to demonstrate that bread can be and is a basic element of life and of survival for people of different religions and cultures. Even though it is handled differently in various cultures and faiths it remains a fundamental element of food for many people. Helga and Walter were a Jewish couple. Ramona was a Buddhist from America. Lola was a Muslim from Pakistan who was accompanied by several friends. Steven was a chaplain in a Christian hospital. Ruth and her daughter Miriam, were Jewish.

Let us now listen to Helga:

**Another reader:** “I was asked to organise a bread baking experience involving different cultures and faiths. We all worked together at long tables. We made our dough and then we began to shape the dough according to our various customs and designs. For example, our Muslim friends made chapatis; our Jewish friends made challah, that is bread with a plait along the top. All the breads were baked in the Synagogue kitchen oven and were then shared among the participants who enjoyed them very much. The participants talked animatedly about the different ways of baking. They also spoke of their memories of watching and helping their mothers while at home.”
Everyone felt united by the fond memories created by the event and by the wonderful smell of the freshly baked bread. But much more than those, we were united by the atmosphere which brought us all back to our origins.”

**Reader: Let us listen to a reflection from:**
‘Hymn of the Universe’ by Pierre Teilhard de Chardin.

‘Since … Lord — in the steppes of Asia — I have neither bread, nor wine, nor altar, I will raise myself beyond these symbols, up to the pure majesty of the real itself; I, your priest, will make the whole earth my altar and on it will offer you all the labours and sufferings of the world. … I call before me the whole vast anonymous army of living humanity … all of them, Lord, I try to gather into my arms, so as to hold them out to you in offering. This is the material of my sacrifice; the only material you desire. … the offering you really want, is nothing less than the growth of the world borne ever onwards in the stream of universal becoming.

Receive, O Lord, this all-embracing host which your whole creation … offers you at this dawn of a new day. …This bread, our toil, is of itself, I know, but an immense fragmentation; this wine, our pain, is no more, I know, than a draught that dissolves. Yet in the very depths of this formless mass you have implanted — and this I am sure of, for I sense it — a desire, irresistible, hallowing, which makes us cry out, believer and unbeliever alike: ‘**Lord, make us one.’**

**Reading from John 17:20**

“I pray not only for these …
May they all be one …
With me in them and you in me, may they be perfect in unity”.

A pause for reflection.
Intercessory prayer:

Leader: Lord at this time as we strive to widen the circle of our contacts in our lives, grant that we can include everyone and converse with those among whom we live:

Help us to appreciate other faiths and cultures that are striving to build a better world.  
Lord hear us:  
Lord graciously hear us.

Help us to befriend people outside the circle of our family, friends, religions and culture, so that we might appreciate and notice the diversity among us which enriches us rather than divides us.  
Lord hear us:  
Lord graciously hear us.

Help us to encourage people everywhere, whatever their faith, so that they may grow stronger in their respective faiths and deepen their knowledge of other faiths.  
Lord hear us:  
Lord graciously hear us.

Help us to co-operate with other religious communities and faith communities in order to break down any barriers that there may be between us and to strive for greater unity.  
Lord hear us:  
Lord graciously hear us.
All: Our Father……

Leader: Let us pray

Lord, in your eyes everyone is equal and has the same rights and responsibilities. Where people of other faiths and cultures are in any way abused, enable us to denounce such actions. Lord, give us the courage we need to stand up for our brothers and sisters and to promote one human family living in love and respecting each others views and creeds. We make this prayer through Christ Our Lord.

Amen

Concluding Hymn

Deep Peace of the Running Wave
John Rutter with SloMo Geese ..

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EAFCY_4mrWM

Deep peace of the running wave to you
Deep peace of the flowing air to you
Deep peace of the quiet earth to you
Deep peace of the shining stars to you
Deep peace of the Song of peace to you.

Action:

For those who live near people of other faiths or cultures: invite someone to your home and share some food or drink together.
Interculturality

A Sign of the Kingdom of God Among us

Week 4
Song:

**Bind us together, Lord:** (Bob Gillman)

Bind us together, Lord  
Bind us together  
With cords that cannot be broken  
Bind us together, Lord  
Bind us together  
Bind us together in Love

**Chorus:**  
There is only one God,  
There is only one King  
There is only one Body,  
That is why we sing.

Fit for the glory of God,  
Purchased by His precious Blood  
Born with the right to be free  
Jesus the victory has won.

We are the family of God  
We are the promise divine  
We are God’s chosen desire  
We are the glorious new wine.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fw_5_JHWLfs

**Leader:** Extend greetings and a warm welcome to one another in the name of the Lord:

**Leader’s Introduction:** At the beginning of 2016, on two occasions, Pope Francis visited two centres, where there were many refugees. One of these was in Italy, near Rome, while the other was on the Greek island of Lesbos, where people who arrive after crossing the seas are accommodated while being assessed and documented.

In each case, the head of the Catholic Church, found himself, ministering not to members of his own community but primarily to Muslims, Orthodox and Copts. Not only did he minister and speak to them but even more striking was his gesture of walking among them
and shaking hands or curtseying before them, several hundreds of them.

What was most impressive about his gestures was that for him they were people, they were suffering humanity, first and foremost. They were not a religiously divided people!

Where is this attitude of the Pope coming from? Why is he so open to people? Why is he not looking after his own only?

Reading:

**The Parable of the man with the Open Heart!**

*(Luke 10:25-37)*

“A lawyer stood up to put him to the test, saying, “Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?” He said to him, “What is written in the law? How do you read?” And he answered, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself.” And he said to him, “You have answered right; do this, and you will live.”

But he, desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?” Jesus replied, “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he fell among robbers, who stripped him and beat him, and departed, leaving him half dead. Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him he passed by on the other side. So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by...
on the other side. But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was; and when he saw him, he had compassion, and went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine; then he set him on his own beast and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. And the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, ‘Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, I will repay you when I come back.’ Which of these three, do you think, proved neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?” He said, “The one who showed mercy on him.” And Jesus said to him, “Go and do likewise.”

(Revised Standard Version Catholic Edition (RSVCE)

Leader:

A reflection on accepting the “Other” with profound respect.

I’d say that most of the people who hear the story of the good Samaritan from Luke’s Gospel get carried away with the charming story of the good guy, who without belonging to any group, religious or other, acted amazingly in the circumstance which confronted him. In recent times, it has not been unusual, to hear stories from different parts of the world about people standing by while innocent people were being killed and they did nothing! Nearer to home, we come across, on a regular basis, people from far and near who are abandoned in doorways or sitting on our streets looking for assistance of some kind. Sadly, we too tend to walk past such people. Are we really that different from the Levite or the Temple priest? Who is the one on the road? Is it the immigrant? Or is it the broken person? The abandoned one? These speak of different categories of suffering persons in our Society today. The tax collectors and the sinners? The scribes and the Pharisees?

In our modern world there can be a tendency to view people who are different from us as “other”! Today, so many of our borders are fluid and so people of every kind are coming to live among us, in order to seek freedom from terrorism, oppression, war and poverty. We are challenged by this reading to discern whether we are behaving like the scribes and the Pharisees or not, in our reactions to the new-comers in our communities, who may be impoverished, lost, helpless and abandoned.

I think that this is what Pope Francis is showing us and demonstrating for us as he reaches out to the refugees and to those who are lost in today’s world. Anyone could be an abandoned, confused or disoriented person waiting for the one who will come and bind up the wounds of loneliness, abandonment, isolation and ostracism that so many new people are finding on the road of life that is ours today.
Song: 
Like a Shepherd
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GSJXi_wXLi4

Chorus: Like a shepherd He feeds his flock and gathers the lambs in His arms, 
Holding them carefully close to His heart, leading them home.

Say to the cities of Judah: Prepare the way of the Lord. 
Go to the mountaintop, lift your voice: 
Jerusalem, here is our God.

I myself will shepherd them, 
For others have led them astray. 
The lost I will rescue and heal their wounds 
and pasture them, giving them rest. 
Come unto me if you are heavily burdened, 
And take my yoke up on your shoulders. 
I will give you rest.

(Bob Dufford, SJ © 1993 
Robert F. Connor, SJ New Dawn Music Published by OCP Publications.)

A reflection on Interculturalism as viewed by a group of missionaries

The introduction to the Divine Word Missionaries (SVD) Constitutions offers the following vision: “As a community of brothers from different nations and languages, we become a living symbol of the unity and diversity of the Church.” Over the past fifteen years, there has been a
movement to revive and renew the SVD tradition and character of studying and appreciating cultural difference at a deeper level. Fr. Antonio Pernia described it as “the attitude of openness to and respect for the cultures of other peoples... whereby the gospel message is not simply parachuted in from outside, but enters into dialogue .... whereby the missionary is ready not just to change people but to be changed himself [herself]…” (Verbum 45.1 (2004), 34). Parallel to this recent development has been the explicit focus on interculturality—developing enriching and challenging relationships between cultures (nations, generations, genders, etc.).

Very early on in its history, the Society of the Divine Word became international. With the Second Vatican Council, it received a more positive perspective for looking at the world and culture in general and at non-Western cultures in particular. Seeds for the intentional process of inculturation were planted. The SVD (and the Missionary Sisters, Servants of the Holy Spirit, (SSpS)) talked more in terms of their multicultural life.

Christianity began to realize more and more the growth and vibrancy of the church of the “global South” and the need for collaboration among all local churches within the world church. In 1990, the largest national group within the SVD shifted from being German to Indonesian. Around this same time, we recognized the necessity and the opportunities for moving from simply being international and tolerant, from being multicultural and adapting, to being truly intercultural through mutually enriching relationships. Workshops on international/intercultural living in formation communities began to be offered.

The Society of the Divine Word at all levels continues to address the components and to propose the action steps that are needed for the ongoing development of intercultural relationships and dynamics, both ad extra and ad intra. For example, acknowledging that “tensions and conflicts inevitably arise among confreres due to generation gaps, racism, ethnocentrism, personality differences and stereotyping,” the Society maintains that “intercultural communities need to be consciously created, intentionally promoted, carefully cared for and attentively nurtured” (CD 30).

I am sure that these insights are shared by many groups today and certainly it is very much an ongoing task to live respectfully with all peoples and to treasure their uniqueness.
Many faces, many cultures, one heart!

Catholic missionaries from many congregations and nationalities gathered in Jharsuguda, India, in 2015, to reflect on their mission to reach out to the peoples of the world in the name of Jesus, through care, compassion and justice.

Action:

What can I, we, do to intensify our understanding of inculturation in my, our, situation?

(Pause and reflect)
Prayers of Intercession:

Leader: Let us pray to the Triune God, that we, His people here and now, might always be open to the people around us and be sensitive to their needs in their realities: For this we pray to the Lord:
Response: Lord, In your mercy, hear our prayer.

Reader: Let us pray for Pope Francis that he may continue to demonstrate to us the loving compassion of the Good Samaritan, through his generous gestures of accepting people as they are and by doing good to them. For this we pray to the Lord:
Response: Lord, In your mercy, hear our prayer.

Reader: We pray that we might all notice, treasure and welcome the gifts of our different cultures lived by the diverse members of our communities. For this we pray to the Lord;
Response: Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Reader: Let us have the grace to acknowledge that our culture, our way of doing things is but one way among many of acknowledging the world around us. For this we pray to the Lord:
Response: Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Reader: Let us thank God, the Holy Spirit, who inspires the many people, young and old who step out onto the road of life to meet and comfort the many people who are abandoned or confused thereon: For this we pray to the Lord:
Response: Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Leader: Concluding prayer:
Father, we thank You for all the gifts of Creation which surpass all that we could ever imagine. Thank you for the beauty of human diversity, of human cultures and art which can enhance our lives without ever diminishing others. Let us welcome with open and joy filled hearts and sprits the gifts of life, culture and values which others bring to our lives so that our lives might be further enriched by the beauties of creation.
Amen.
Action:

*Let each person enquire from a person of another culture about how they show respect to God; to an elder; to the land or to something else.*

Concluding hymn:

**We are one in the Lord**

(https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o7_wHi0PNHg)

We are one in the Spirit, we are one in the Lord
We are one in the Spirit, we are one in the Lord
And we pray that our unity will one day be restored
And they’ll know we are Christians by our love, by our love
Yeah they’ll know we are Christians by our love

We will work with each other, we will work side by side
We will work with each other, we will work side by side
And we’ll guard each one’s dignity and save each one’s pride
And they’ll know we are Christians by our love, by our love
Yeah, they’ll know we are Christians by our love.

PETER SCHOLTES

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This booklet of prayers and reflections on INTERCULTURALITY was prepared by Irish based members of VIVAT INTERNATIONAL

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