

Intercultural Living – The What and Why

Fr. Anthony “Tony” Gittins, CSSp.

January 20, 2022 – 2 pm ET (1 pm CT, noon MT, and 11 am PT)

Opening Prayer

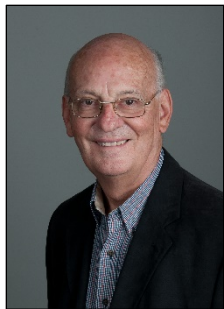
Jesus says that in his society there is a new way for people to live:

you show wisdom, by trusting people;
you handle leadership, by serving;
you handle offenders, by forgiving;
you handle money, by sharing'
you handle authority, by gentle firmness;
you handle enemies, by loving;
and you handle violence, by suffering.



In fact, you have a new attitude toward everything, toward everybody.
Toward nature, toward the state in which you happen to live,
toward women, toward refugees, asylum seekers, marginalized and homeless people:
toward all and every single thing.
Because this is a Jesus society,
and you repent, not by feeling bad,
but by thinking -- and acting -- differently.

Rudy Wiebe, *The Blue Mountains of China*. (Lightly edited by Tony)



Tony Gittins, Professor Emeritus from Chicago Theological Union (1984-2012) where he held the Bishop Ford Chair of Mission Theology (1999-2008), will help us explore what intercultural living is and why it is so important.

Tony, a member of the Congregation of the Holy Ghost (Spiritans), authored *Living Mission Interculturally – Faith, Culture, and the Renewal of Praxis*, (Liturgical Press, 2015). Born in Manchester (England), Tony lived among the Mende people of Sierra Leone, West Africa (1972-1980) as a missionary pastor, linguist, and ethnographer. From 1980 to 1984 he was Formation Director in London and lectured at the Missionary Institute. Since then, he has done missionary anthropological work in several countries beyond Africa, including Pakistan, Kiribati, and the Trobriand Islands.



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INTRODUCTION TO INTERCULTURAL WORKSHOP

A. TWO FOCAL QUESTIONS

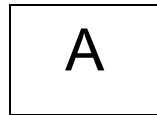
1. Can you distinguish *international* and *intercultural*?
2. Can you distinguish *multi-cultural* and *cross-cultural*?

B. PRELIMINARY THOUGHTS

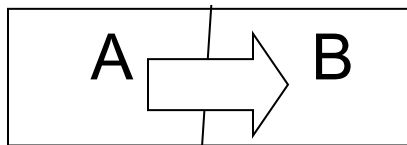
1. Intercultural living is radically different from living in an international community.
 - It describes specifically, *the way we live out our faith/discipleship*.
2. There can be no faith in theory; only existentially: it must be lived.
 - Faith is expressed in practice, as discipleship (“lived faith”).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

MONO-CROSS-MULTI-INTERCULTURAL LIVING;

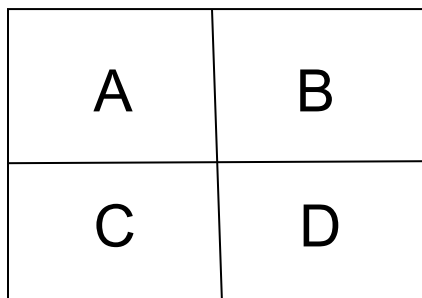
1. MONOCULTURAL LIVING



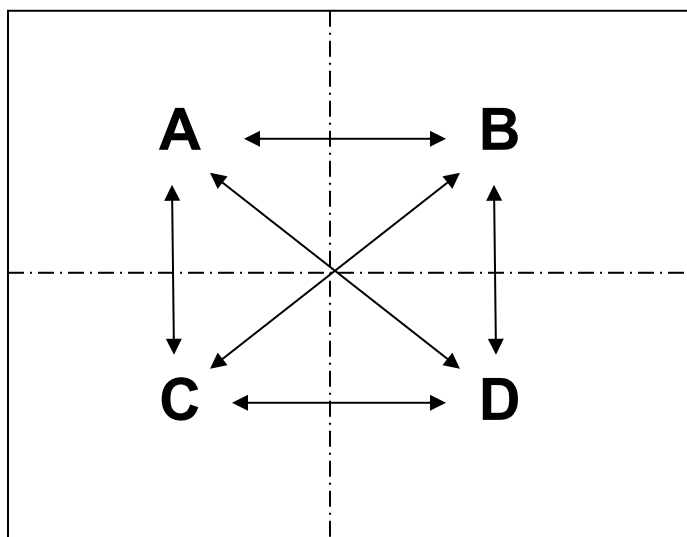
2. CROSS-CULTURAL LIVING



3. MULTICULTURAL LIVING



4. INTERCULTURAL LIVING



A VISION MUST BE

- reframed - not just 'the same old same old' but connected to people's dreams but in a new way - toward a *tertium quid* (new outcome)
- transformed - that is, life-bearing for the contemporary world
- comprehensible - not unduly complex, but memorable: if people forget it, it cannot sustain them
- imaginative - making sense to people yet surprising them by stretching their imagination; and relating to their lives
- relevant - engaging with the lives of those who embrace it, and the lives of its intended beneficiaries; otherwise it will be empty
- embodied - the leader must incarnate the vision, not simply articulate it. The vision must be born of the leader's own integrity.
- collaborative - not just the leader's project but requiring the work of others; a leader without followers is only a voice in the wilderness.
- passionate - a burning conviction; and since leaders inherit teams rather than create them, mutual trust must be built up, and the passion sustained.

From Warren Bennis and B. Nannis, *Leaders*. HarperRow, 1986. in C. Handy, *The Age of Unreason*, Harvard Business School, 1989:134-5.

- ... and risky- worth living and dying for. Otherwise, what's the point of your life?

■ J. Chittister, *The Fire in These Ashes*, 1995.

Anthony J. Gittins, CSSp.



FROM INVITATION TO RADICAL WELCOME

| | INVITATION | INCLUSION | RADICAL WELCOME |
|--------------------|---|---|---|
| THE MESSAGE | <i>"Come and join us, and share the riches of our cultural and religious tradition"</i> | <i>"Come and join our community and help us to diversify internally and internationally"</i> | <i>"Bring your cultural and religious values, your voice and yourself: help us to become an intercultural community"</i> |
| THE PURPOSE | <i>ASSIMILATION: We invite new people to become one of us as part of our community</i> | <i>INCORPORATION: Marginal "others" are welcome but the community's style and practices remain</i> | <i>INCARNATION: The community will be transformed by each person's talents and faith commitment</i> |
| THE COST | <i>Little cost to the community: structures are set and newcomers incorporated into them. Resisters are marginalized or removed</i> | <i>Some cost to the community: it preaches inclusivity but does not practice power-analysis or self-analysis. Individuals sink or swim.</i> | <i>Significant cost to the community, striving to practice real inclusion, and be mutually enriched through the infusion of new and culturally different ways of living the faith</i> |
| THE OUTCOME | <i>Encouraging numbers, but the community is very monocultural. Those who are different are marginalized or overlooked</i> | <i>High turnover of members. Whoever is not mainstream is muted or made to leave. Community remains largely monocultural, with few exceptions</i> | <i>The community evolves organically. Difference is dignified and valued. Authority does not dominate but respects all. There is a common spirit and missionary commitment.</i> |

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Anthony J. Gittins, CSSp. 2022.