



# SHCJ ASSOCIATES NEWSLETTER

## AMERICAN PROVINCE

AUTUMN 2011  
VOLUME IX ISSUE IV



### A Letter from the Director

I hope that many of you are already planning to attend our [Associates National Gathering next June 22<sup>nd</sup> - 24<sup>th</sup>](#). We are in the midst of finalizing the speakers and sessions and will get the registration materials to you as soon as everything is complete.

Knowing that the cost is a critical component of your decision, we are keeping the cost at the same rate as 2008. [The fee will be \\$150 if you register by February 28th](#) or \$175 if you register later. I hope that you plan to join with other Associates and Sisters in Rosemont next June!

In November each year, I try to do a single print mailing with the various materials that are produced for you at this time. 2011 is no exception. Besides the autumn issue of the Newsletter, the mailing includes:

#### [Associate Directory 2011](#)

[Our Dear Retreat 2012](#) - These reflection materials can be used at any time from Advent through Epiphany. Pray them alone and/or in a local Associate faith sharing group.

[Associate Finance Report 2011](#) - As a result of the survey responses, we produced a report explaining our income and expenses for the last fiscal year. Share your thoughts so we know if we hit the mark on what you want to see. If you get the newsletter electronically, you will receive this report electronically also.

May we each find time to reflect on the blessings that we received this past year and to offer our gratitude to God for the abundance of Divine Love in our lives and in our world. You may wish to use a technique that I learned on retreat one year - name your gifts from A to Z. I was amazed at the ease in which I flew through the alphabet. In the end, I created one list of people who were gifts in my life and another for all other forms of blessings! Wonder and gratitude are bound to flow!

Thank you for the blessings that you each have been in my work and in my life!

In gratitude,

Cathi Duffy

Director of SHCJ Associates, USA

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## Action Not Words

*Each person also has a right to the conditions for living a decent life, faith and family life, food and shelter, education and employment, health care and housing. We also have a duty to secure and respect these rights not only for ourselves, but for others, and to fulfill our responsibilities to our families, to each other, and to the larger society.*

U.S. Catholic Bishops

Faithful Citizenship: A Catholic Call to Political Responsibility

As we move towards the Christmas season, finding the perfect gift for each one on our shopping list may be cause for stress. Consider if there are people on your list who might appreciate a fair trade item. This is the perfect gift in that it is the gift that gives twice - to the recipient and to the grower or artisan.

Fair trade is about right relationships and ensuring that the grower or artisan receives a fair price for their product. Although we want to pay a great price, we must ask ourselves if it comes at the cost of a just price to the one who produces or harvests the product. Being aware and mindful in our consumer purchases is how we are being called to make a difference in the lives of many who are part of our personal chain of life. If it seems overwhelming to you, start small and expand over time.

To learn more about fair trade, watch the video produced by CRS Fair Trade:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yv0vP1ncaDw>

Some food items for your holiday celebrations can be fair trade. Coffee, teas, and chocolate are the obvious first choices. Local producers of other items can often ensure fair trade is being practiced.

There are a number of fair trade options, including purchasing through:

- Catholic Relief Services at [www.crsfairtrade.org](http://www.crsfairtrade.org)
- SERRV International at [www.serrv.org](http://www.serrv.org) or
- Ten Thousand Villages  
<http://www.tenthousandvillages.com>.

Batey Beads, organized by Associates Barbara DeConcini and Cindy Platko, is a possible source for your jewelry needs knowing that your purchases benefit women in Batey Lecheria.

Let us know your sources for fair trade items and we can share them with other Associates. Contact us at [associates-usa@shcj.org](mailto:associates-usa@shcj.org).

## *Cornelia's Thoughts on Active Lives*

As we enter into the activities of the upcoming Christmas season, perhaps a thought of Cornelia's may help us keep everything in perspective.



*When you walk  
through the  
muddy streets,  
love God with  
your feet...*

*Be generous and of great heart*

*We ought to look upon our actions  
as so many paths leading us  
straight to God,  
as so many steps to elevate us  
in grace and glory*

*Remember of yourself  
you can do nothing but  
in God, for God, and with God  
you can do all things.*

*It is precisely because you are  
called to live busy lives, that you must  
lead a life of prayer*

*Generosity, generosity, generosity  
must be the beginning and ending of life.*

*Give us O Lord  
a love full of action*

## Connecting with Cornelia and Charism: Gratitude - Awareness of love

*“... ah! How much we must all pray for each other that we may prove our gratitude to God for all He has done for us, and for our dear little Society of the Holy Child”*

In this season when our thoughts turn to our bounty of blessings, let's reflect on Cornelia's understanding of gratitude. (The following was taken from the *Informatio*, p. 173 - 175)



### **GRATITUDE: AWARENESS OF LOVE**

One of Cornelia's most characteristic attitudes was that of gratitude. It is both an awakening of love and the product of her love. She shows herself profoundly grateful for the sufferings of Christ and for the privilege of sharing in them. It is this note of gratitude in suffering which is the distinctive mark of her spirit of gratitude.

Cornelia's gratitude arises with her faith. Faith is new sight –insight into the generosity of God in giving her the gift of her baptism and of her Catholic faith; the gift of a happy marriage blessed with beautiful children; the gift of a religious vocation, and all the attendant gifts which are mediated to her through persons, places and situations. God is the giver of all, the source of endless goodness (CC8: 126).

Cornelia's recognition of God's goodness also enables in her a sense of right proportion between herself and the giver of all good gifts. It leads her to the truth of her condition of need before him, so that her gratitude is a natural response, a spontaneous expression of her right-minded humility. It was so much a state of mind with her that one can easily track it though her life from the dawning of her Catholic faith to her death.

In 1835, Cornelia wrote to her sister Adeline in defense of Pierce's investigation into the Catholic Church: "Daily I do thank God for having so blessed me in such a husband and our dear children such a father ... " (D6). In 1846, she told her brother Ralph that she renewed her baptismal promises every day, surely an act of gratitude. Joy was an incentive to

Cornelia's gratitude: "I never was happier in my life," she wrote after her reception into the Church.

At the Trinita, now unsettled about where and how she would begin religious life, Cornelia wrote of the life itself: "... This is the thrice blessed road that our dear Lord has been pleased to place me and I am but too happy and grateful for such a vocation".

Religious life was, in Cornelia's mind, an identification and a participation with Christ, especially in his passion and death; it was a life of dying to self (CC21:30). When she expressed her gratitude for such a life, it was in these terms that she spoke: "Can we ever be grateful enough for being admitted to vows!!! and the wearing of his livery!" .

The cross is a treasured gift to the Church and so it was in Cornelia's life: "How ungrateful it is to higgie with our Lord over the daily crosses of this short pilgrimage," she wrote in 1873 amidst crosses aplenty. Her teaching on the subject is summed up in the words: "... be grateful for every little cross ... for it is only suffering which brings us to the peace of God which passeth all understanding!" (CC8:118, D1).

Bellasis has the impression that Cornelia's prayer was mostly thanksgiving and joy (D75:565). This is no doubt true because there was nothing -- no cross, no joy, no gift -- for which Cornelia could not thank God. "Myself sick all this week. God is good! Good! Good! Oh when shall we understand the extent of his goodness," she jotted in her workbook when an unexpected gift of money came in (D26:66).

Upon arriving safely in Marseilles in 1836 she offered "prayers and thanksgiving to the good and merciful God who had saved us from the perils of the deep" (89). When Pierce said his first Mass at the Trinita, Cornelia's heart expanded with gratitude. "I was almost surprised to see her so joyful," wrote James Wilcox who was present; "I am sure it is the happiest day of her life ... " (D8). She was still in that mood when she wrote from Paris to Adeline: "It is not for nothing that I have given him to God. You may be sure this thought gives me much consolation ..." Cornelia was thankful that he was "deeply engaged in the duties of the ministry" (D2). Her meeting with Pius IX in 1869 was a high point in her life. She wrote of it with overflowing gratitude: "We thank God with ... every beating of our hearts that we came to Rome ourselves to work through every difficulty and to revivify our faith" .

Cornelia's gratitude to others was freely given. Her faith recognized behind their goodness, God's

## Connecting with Cornelia and Charism (continued)

goodness. Fr Knapen remarked on the grateful way she received his advice on her constitutions during the same 1869 visit to Rome (D3). She was unfailingly and sincerely grateful to Bishops Grant and Danell despite the wounds she suffered at their hands (D1). To her lay benefactors she showed gratitude through the prayers and convent-made gifts she lavished on them (D75:556). Her gratitude also took a practical turn. For instance, she reduced the school fees for the daughter of Mr. Arnold, a kind solicitor (D5). By her gratitude for his plain speaking, she encouraged truth in her relationships with him and her other lay friends (D2).

Cornelia was not sparing of recognition for the good accomplished by her own sisters. Work well done deserved thanks, and in justice she gave it. It was part of her belief that encouragement is far more productive of good than its opposite (D75:551).

In one of her last letters to the American novices, Cornelia wrote with overflowing gratitude to God amidst some of her most heavy sorrows: “ ... ah! How much we must all pray for each other that we may prove our gratitude to God for all He has done for us, and for our dear little Society of the Holy Child” (CC8:118).



## Thanks!

Thanks to all who contributed to the Holy Child Associates this past fiscal year that ended August 31st. A third of the Associates participated in the Appeal. We are most grateful to the following for supporting the Associates:

|                     |                            |                       |
|---------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|
| Gloria Askew        | Mark Flint                 | Rita Newark           |
| Anne Ayella         | Susan Gadziala             | Marilyn Nigro         |
| Heather Banis       | Kathy Gibbons Schuck       | Juliet Njoku          |
| Sarah Brabant       | Hope Gillespie             | Azella O'Dwyer        |
| Nancy Brissette     | Marian Graczyk             | Marilyn Palmer        |
| Joan Cavanagh       | Robert & Stephanie Griffin | Greg & Cindy Platko   |
| Kari Charlson       | Anne Hackett               | Bob & Maury Readinger |
| Jan Clifford        | Beth Hagovsky              | Beverly Richardson    |
| Lynn Crowley        | Margaret Healy             | Marie Ryan            |
| Peggy Cusick        | Peter & Connie Izzo        | Linda Sanfilippo      |
| Marie-Michele Darcy | Virginia Jones             | Judy Talvacchia       |
| Jan Davis           | Peggy Kelly                | Kathy Tatlow          |
| Barbara DeConcini   | Deborah Kissinger          | Steve & Jane Uzzell   |
| Ann Donovan         | Gladys Latshaw             | Margie Villere        |
| Eileen Dorman       | Mary Loftus                | Mariellen Whelan      |
| Ursula Duffy        | Debbie Margulis            | Peg Wierzbicki        |
| Michelle Dugan      | Anita Martineau            | Judy Woods-Knight     |
| Tricia Fell         | Bob & Christine McHugh     |                       |
| Frances Flint       | Kevin & Carol McMenamin    |                       |

We also want to give special thanks to St. Leonard's Alumnae Association for their generous gift to the SHCJ Associates.

If anyone was missed in this report, please accept our apologies. Do let Cathi Duffy know, [cduffy@shcj.org](mailto:cduffy@shcj.org). More details about the SHCJ Associates Finances for the last fiscal year are available in a separate report.



## Poetry off the Shelf by Barbara DeConcini

For this autumn issue of the newsletter, I have selected three poems about loss. Poets through the ages tend to associate the fall of the year with the Biblical Fall and more generally with diminishment, loss, and mourning. [There are exceptions: Think of Keats' Ode to Autumn: "Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness/Close bosom-friend of the maturing sun/Conspiring with him how to load and bless/With fruit the vines that round the thatch-eaves run"].

Only one of these short lyric poems makes specific reference to the fall of the year, but each, I think, has an autumnal quality. Though spaced about a hundred years apart, they share a family resemblance of affect and tone. They are presented here in chronological order. Only the second of them, by Robert Frost, makes a specifically religious reference. Each of them, however, evokes a deep sense of human bereavement and loss which is spiritual in its very nature.

The first two of these are poems of youth. Wordsworth wrote his Lucy poems when he was 28 years old; Frost wrote Bereft when he was barely 20. The third, however, is a poem of maturity. Kay Ryan's Tree Heart, True Heart just appeared in print for the first time this past September, when our former poet laureate (2008-2010) is 66 years old.

Notice how the poet achieves his/her effect in each poem. Wordsworth's moan of mourning turns on a little exclamation with a deep, deep resonance [oh!]; Frost's lonely anxiety on an accretion of feeling generated by repetition ["Word I was....Word I was. . . .Word I had. . ."]. Ryan surprises us with the poem's introduction of the vocative as the last word. That final direct address—"I say no more springs/ without you"—upends utterly the rather erudite-sounding disquisition on "tree hearts" [rings], revealing the broken human heart at the poem's core.

### **She Dwelt among the Untrodden Ways**

She dwelt among the untrodden ways  
Beside the springs of Dove,  
A maid whom there were none to praise  
And very few to love:

A violet by a mossy stone  
Half hidden from the eye!  
Fair as a star, when only one  
Is shining in the sky.

She lived unknown, and few could know  
When Lucy ceased to be;  
But she is in her grave, and, oh,  
The difference to me!

William Wordsworth (1799)

### **Bereft**

Where had I heard this wind before  
Change like this to a deeper roar?  
What would it take my standing there for,  
Holding open a restive door,

Looking down hill to a frothy shore?  
Summer was past and the day was past.  
Sombre clouds in the west were massed.  
Out on the porch's sagging floor,

Leaves got up in a coil and hissed,  
Blindly striking at my knee and missed.  
Something sinister in the tone  
Told me my secret must be known:

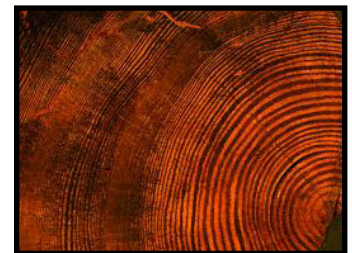
Word I was in the house alone  
Somehow must have gotten abroad,  
Word I was in my life alone,  
Word I had no one left but God.

Robert Frost (1927)

### **Tree Heart, True Heart**

The hearts of trees  
Are serially displaced  
Pressed annually  
Outward to a ring.  
They aren't really  
What we mean  
by hearts, they so  
easily acquiesce,  
willing to thin and  
stretch around some  
upstart green. A  
real heart does not  
give way to spring.  
A heart is true.  
I say no more springs  
without you.

Kay Ryan (2011)



## Meet the Associates by Barbara DeConcini

*This issue's interview is with Deborah Kissinger. Debbie has recently joined the Associates' Core Team.*

BD: *Welcome to the SHCJ Associates Newsletter, Debbie. Please introduce yourself to us.*

DK: Hello, Barbara. I'm delighted to participate in this feature. It's a lovely way to continue meeting and getting acquainted with other associates across the country, especially in the years when we aren't gathering nationally.

BD: *So, let's start with a sense of place. Tell us where you're from.*

DK: I was born and raised in Washington, DC, but I've lived in the Harrisburg, PA area for the past 35 years. Harrisburg, which is the state capitol, is a little more than 100 miles west of Philadelphia and about 120 miles from DC. We actually live in a borough just to the west of Harrisburg called Mechanicsburg. Despite its name, it is actually quite a beautiful bucolic area set between two mountains, rich in farm land. Mechanicsburg is named for a settlement of mechanics who made and repaired Conestoga wagons in the early 19th century.

BD: *Wow, that sounds like quite a change from metro Washington, DC. Tell us about that transition. I assume it has to do with family?*

DK: Yes, indeed! I'm an only child (who happens to be blessed to continue to have my mother (85) in my life). My husband, Les, and I have been married for 38 years. We met in DC at work. Les was one of the first wave of Computer Science graduates, and he spent his career in the Federal Government, retiring in 2004 as the Deputy Director of a Department of Defense Computing Services Center. Les is from the Harrisburg area. When it came time to begin our family and purchase our first home, we decided to relocate from DC for a quieter style of life. Obviously, that has worked out for us.

We have 2 adult sons, Mark and David. Both are in the US Air National Guard in Pa, and they've each had dangerous tours abroad, helping to keep our country safe. We are blessed with four grandchildren—three boys and a girl—all of whom are completely wonderful, of course. I like to say that our grandkids are the whipped cream on the sundae of life! They keep us young, smiling, and tired.

BD: *With two boys to raise, did you get the chance to work outside the home?*

DK: I'm an educator. After graduating from Penn State, I began a career as a learning support teacher. I spent my career in Catholic schools by choice. My strong advocacy for children who learn differently is both a professional commitment and a personal one—our sons Mark and David had some special needs in their school years. I say that I'm retired now, but I do continue to substitute regularly in my local parish school, St. Joseph's. I sub for all grades and even teach gym on occasion!



*Debbie Kissinger*

BD: *When you're not having to go in to sub, what sorts of things are you enjoying doing with your new free time--in addition, of course, to being a grandmother?*

DK: Not surprisingly for an educator, I'm an avid reader, the sort who still likes to hold a book in my hand and turn the pages. No Kindle or Nook for me! One of my other hobbies is making greeting cards for all occasions.

I'm active in our local Y, enjoying several water aerobics classes a week to keep both brain and body in healthy working order. I'm actually working on becoming a certified water fitness instructor. I also participate in the Annual Multiple Sclerosis (MS) Walk fundraiser every spring. (Les was diagnosed with MS 7 years ago.)

Les and I enjoy live theatre, and we're both involved in parish activities (e.g., taking classes and serving as Eucharistic ministers).

BD: *You have a pretty extraordinary history with the SHCJ. Tell our readers how you came to know the Society.*

DK: I do have a long family history with the SHCJ. My great aunt, Mother Mary Mildred (Anne Easby-Smith) and 3 cousins, Sisters Dorothy Wilson, Margaret Wilson, and Winifred Wilson, were all life-long members of the Society. They introduced our whole family to Cornelia Connelly and the amazing story of her life and work.

In particular, Dorothy and I developed a special connection that lasted for over 50 years. In fact, she was the one who wrote to my mother in 1961 to tell her about a new Holy Child school being built in

the Washington, DC area just when I was about to begin high school. I'm a member of the 2nd graduation class of Connelly, School of the Holy Child in Potomac, MD.

Those four years were deeply formative; they became the foundation that has shaped my entire adult life. And the sisters who taught me continue to have a profound influence. I am a Catholic educator by choice. My devotion to Cornelia remains strong. I can even say that she has guided me as a woman, wife, mother, and teacher.

*BD: Granted that personal history, my next question seems unnecessary. But tell us what attracted you to join the SHCJ Associates?*

*DK: My cousin Dorothy died in 2001, before the SHCJ Associates got well established. But in 2007,*



*Debbie with Sr. Mary Lou Bishoff in April 2008*

*I happened to be looking at the SHCJ website and was excited to discover that the Society had lay associates. I immediately contacted Executive Director Cathi Duffy. My discernment process began with the late Sr Mary Lou Bishoff, SHCJ. I made my commitment as an SHCJ Associate in the New Sharon chapel*

*in April 2008—a place which holds so many dear memories for me and my family.*

*BD: Debbie, has being an SHCJ Associate affected your everyday life? If so, how?*

*DK: Being an associate has deepened my faith and my prayer life and rekindled my connection with the sisters, whom I find to be holy and special women. Specifically, I receive spiritual direction from Sr Joanne Sullivan, SHCJ. She offers me resources that help my faith journey. Her love of Cornelia and the Society has deeply affected my own walk with our Lord.*

*Recently Cathi Duffy invited me to serve on the Core Team for the Associates. It's an honor to join this dynamic team who are working to develop the Associates formation and mission work with the SHCJ. My hope is that I can contribute to this growth.*

*BD: Well, as you know, those of us involved in the Batey Beads project in support of the Society's work in the Dominican Republic appreciate your early and continuing involvement with that project of the Associates.*

*DK: Yes, and I'm eager to find other ways to engage. I especially enjoy my regular visits to New Sharon to visit with the sisters in Holy Child Center, listen to their stories, and seek their advice. These senior sisters have such a wealth of knowledge and wisdom to share.*

*And on a very personal note, I do love learning more about my cousins from the nuns who knew them. I was not aware of many of their accomplishments. So my "family" keeps growing, as I meet other associates and sisters and my Cornelian spiritual life continues to be enriched.*

*BD: Thanks so much for talking with us, Debbie.*



### **Core Team 2011 - 2012**

*Front row (l-r) Kathy Gibbons, Cathi Duffy, Judy Talvacchia, Debbie Kissinger*

*Back row Steve Uzzell, Barbara DeConcini, Linda Mennis, Bob McHugh*  
*Missing: Marilyn Nigro, Sr Margaret Mary Bell, Sr. Carol Ann Smith*



***Mark Your Calendars for these important events!***

*Epiphany*

*Friday, Jan. 6, 2012*

*Charlotte - evening*

*Sunday, Jan. 8, 2012*

*New Sharon - 11:30 am*

*Rye - 11 am*

*Check in your area  
for an Epiphany celebration*

*Associates Commitment Ceremony*

*Saturday, January 14, 2012*

*Melrose, MA*

***June 22 - 24, 2012***

***Actions Not Words***

***Associates National Gathering  
Rosemont, PA***

*We need your help...*

*To assist in small or big ways, please contact*

*Dolores McCormack - Hospitality  
(food, lodging, driving, ambiance)  
demac1@verizon.net*

*Debbie Kissinger - Liturgy & Prayer  
DAKissinger@verizon.net*

*Cathi Duffy - Speakers, Sessions, & Activities  
cduffy@shej.org*